CENTURY READINGS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY POETS

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CENTURY READINGS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY POETS

SELECTED AND EDITED

BY

FREDERICK E. PIERCE, PH.D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
AT YALE UNIVERSITY

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PREFACE

When a teacher of nineteenth century poetry prepares assignments for a class, the first and most insistent need is a wide range of choice. Every teacher teaches best his or her favorite poems. Different classes and institutions differ in their reactions to any given body of selections. But, though the need of this wide range has long been recognized, no textbook could be devised to meet it without becoming impossibly cumbersome.

Recently certain institutions have tried to solve this problem by a new plan for their courses. They have read certain of the old standard poets in cheap complete editions of their works, and have tried to cover the rest of the ground by textbooks of selections representing the remainder of the field. Unfortunately textbooks of the past have not been planned for courses of this type and have proved somewhat unsatisfactory. The present book is planned to meet the needs of a course so conducted. Major poets whose complete works can be had cheaply are here omitted. The omissions include Coleridge, Wordsworth, Scott, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, and Browning. Several poets who are probably majors, but whose rank is disputed, and whose complete poems exist only in expensive editions are included. All minor poets of the century who seemed to us desirable for an undergraduate course are included. We may have omitted some dignified figures, such as Lord De Tabley and Alice Meynell, but we felt that the study of them belonged to small groups, not to large popular courses.

In the case of two living poets, copyright restrictions have prevented us from representing them as fully as their rank seemed to demand. Aside from these two exceptions, the greater poets are represented very fully, and enough has been given from the lesser writers to show adequately their occasional beauties and their historical significance. Irish poets, with the exception of Moore, O'Shaughnessy and Yeats, have been omitted; for, though we think highly of their merits, we consider them generally as belonging to a separate literary world.

With this book and the cheap editions of the poets enumerated above, an instructor has wide leeway in charting his courses. He has also the materials for tracing literary revolutions and evolutions from the rise of Napoleon about 1796 to the death of Victoria in 1901. And whatever course he charts, his superior students will have right at hand a considerable amount of inspiring "extra reading."

Dates in italics are those of composition; dates in Roman those of first publication. By first publication, unless otherwise stated, we usually mean the first appearance in book form. Errors in so wide a field are always possible, and corrections are always welcome.

F. E. P.

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CONTENTS

PAGE

SAMUEL ROGERS

A Wish . . . 3
An Italian Song . . . 3
Written in the Highlands of Scotland . . . 3
The Boy of Egremond . . . 4
From *Human Life* . . . 4
From *Italy*
Meillerie . . . 5
Coll 'Alto . . . 6

THOMAS CAMPBELL

From "Pleasures of Hope" . . . 8
Ye Mariners of England . . . 9
Lochiel's Warning . . . 10
Hohenlinden . . . 11
Lord Ullin's Daughter . . . 12
Battle of the Baltic . . . 12
From *Gertrude of Wyoming* . . . 13
The Last Man . . . 14

ROBERT SOUTHEY

For a Column at Newberry . . . 15
For a Cavern . . . 15
For the Cenotaph at Ermenonville . . . 15
The Inchcape Rock . . . 15
The Well of St. Keyne . . . 16
Bishop Bruno . . . 17
The Battle of Blenheim . . . 18
God's Judgment on a Wicked Bishop . . . 19
From *Thalaba* . . . 20
"My days among the dead are passed" . . . 24
The Cataract of Lodore . . . 25

GEORGE CRABBE

From "The Parish Register"
Andrew Collett . . . 26
Widow Goe . . . 27
Catherine Lloyd . . . 28
Isaac Ashford . . . 29
Roger Cuff . . . 31
The Gentleman Farmer . . . 32

THOMAS MOORE

From *The Irish Melodies*
Go Where Glory Waits Thee . . . 39
Oh! Breathe Not His Name . . . 39
Oh! Think Not My Spirits Are Always as Light . . . 40
The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls . . . 40
Though the Last Glimpse of Erin . . . 40
Eveleen's Bower . . . 41
Let Erin Remember the Days of Old . . . 41
The Song of Fionnuala . . . 41
At the Mid Hour of Night . . . 41
'Tis the Last Rose of Summer . . . 42
The Young May-Moon . . . 42
The Minstrel-Boy . . . 42
The Time I've Lost in Wooing . . . 42
Dear Harp of My Country . . . 43
O'Donohue's Mistress . . . 43

PAGE

I Wish I was by that Dim Lake 44
From *National Airs*
All That's Bright Must Fade 44
Oft, in the Stilly Night 44

JAMES HOGG

The Skylark 45
Kilmeny 45
The Witch of Fife 49
A Boy's Song 54

MRS. FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS

England's Dead 54
The Cavern of the Three Tells 55
The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers 56
The American Forest Girl 56
Mozart's Requiem 58
The Coronation of Inez de Castro 58
Let Us Depart 59
The Last Song of Sappho 60

JOHN CLARE

Song: "One gloomy eve" 61
Proposals for Building a Cottage 61
July 61
Wild Bees 63
Home Yearnings 63
Mary Bateman 64
The Morning Walk 64
To My Wife 64
Maid of the Wilderness 65
I Am! 65

THOMAS HOOD

Fair Ines 66
Ruth 66
I Remember, I Remember 67
The Death-Bed 67
The Dream of Eugene Aram 67
The Haunted House 69
The Bridge of Sighs 72
The Song of the Shirt 73
Faithless Sally Brown 74
Faithless Nelly Gray 75
Mary's Ghost 76
The Cigar 77
A Parental Ode to My Son 77
A Serenade 78
November 78

WINTHROP MACKWORTH PRAED

Love at a Rout 79
To —— 80
Second Love 80
The Chaunt of the Brazen Head 81
The Vicar 82
Quince 83
The Belle of the Ball-Room 84
A Letter of Advice 85
Our Ball 86
Palinodia 87
One More Quadrille 88

JOHN KEBLE

From *The Christian Year* 89

PAGE

Morning 89
Advent Sunday 90
Second Sunday After Trinity 91
Twenty-third Sunday After Trinity 92
St. Matthew 93
St. Michael and All Angels 94
Forms of Prayer to Be Used at Sea 95

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

From *The Brides' Tragedy*
Poor Old Pilgrim Misery 96
A Ho! A Ho! 96
From *Torrismond*
How many Times Do I Love Thee, Dear? 96
From *Death's Jest-Book*
To Sea, To Sea! 96
The Swallow Leaves Her Nest 97
If Thou Wilt Ease Thine Heart 97
An Eastern Tale 97
Lady, Was It Fair of Thee 97
A Cypress-Bough, and a Rose-Wreath Sweet 98
Old Adam, the Carrion Crow 98
We Do Lie Beneath the Grass 98
The Boding Dreams 98
Dream-Pedlary 99
The Phantom Wooer 99

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

Rose Aylmer 100
Fiesolan Idyl 100
Child of a Day, Thou Knowest Not 101
Lyrics, to Ianthe
"Away, my Verse" 101
"When Helen first saw wrinkles" 101
"Ianthe, you are called to cross the sea" 101
"Pleasure, why thus desert the heart?" 101
"Mild is the parting year, and sweet" 101
"Past ruin'd Ilion Helen lives" 102
All Tender Thoughts That E'er Possess'd 102
So Late Removed 102
For An Epitaph at Fiesole 102
The Maid's Lament 102
The Shades of Agamemnon and Iphigeneia 102
The Death of Artemidora 105
Little Aglae 106
Dirce 106
On Lucretia Borgia's Hair 106
To Wordsworth 106
To Joseph Ablett 107
On his Own Iphigeneia and Agamemnon 108
Farewell to Italy 108
Mother, I Cannot Mind My Wheel 108
A Sea-Shell Speaks 108
Fate, I Have Asked Few Things of Thee 109
To a Bride 109
Do You Remember Me? 109
No, My Own Love 109
One Year Ago 110
Yes, I Write Verses Now and Then 110
You Smiled, You Spoke 110
Soon, O Ianthe, Life is O'er 110
To a Cyclamen 110
Give Me the Eyes 110
Twenty Years Hence 111
Remain, Ah Not in Youth Alone 111

PAGE

"You Must Give Back," Her Mother Said 111
The Maid I Loved Ne'er Thought of Me 111
To a Painter 111
Dull is My Verse 111
Why, Why Repine 112
Proud Word You Never Spoke 112
Alas, How Soon the Hours Are Over 112
My Hopes Retire 112
Various the Roads of Life 112
Is It Not Better 112
I Know Not Whether I Am Proud 112
How Many Voices Gaily Sing 112
To Robert Browning 112
Thrasymedes and Eunoë 113
Iphigeneia and Agamemnon 114
The Hamadryad 115
Hyperbion 119
Shakespeare and Milton 120
There Falls With Every Wedding Chime 120
Blythe Bell that Calls 120
An Old Man to a Young Girl 120
There Was a Lovely Tree I Knew 120
To Age 121
The Chrysolites and Rubies Bacchus Brings 121
Years, Many Parti-Colored Years 121
I Wonder Not That Youth Remains 121
Rose Aylmer's Hair 121
Death Stands Above Me 121
On His Seventy-fifth Birthday 121
Under the Lindens 121
Rosina 122
Commination 122
On Southey's Death 122
The Three Roses 122
An Aged Man who Loved to Doze Away 122
Well I Remember How You Smiled 123
Pan 123
So Sad a Mourner Never Bent 123
Friends 123
We May Repair 123
For a Gravestone in Spain 123
To My Ninth Decade 123

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Cowper's Grave 124
The Cry of the Children 125
The Poet and the Bird 127
Confessions 128
The Mask 129
Sonnets from the Portuguese 130
A Musical Instrument 139

WILLIAM BARNES

Easter Zunday 140
Easter Monday 140
The Girt Woak Tree That's in the Dell 140
Jeane's Wedden Day in Mornen 141
Eclogue—The Veairies 141
The Settle an' the Girt Wood Vier 143
The Beam in Grenley Church 143
Culver Dell and the Squire 144
A Lot o' Maïdens A-Runnèn the Vields— 144

EMILY BRONTË

A Little While 145

PAGE

Death 146
Remembrance 146
Song 147
The Prisoner 147
To Imagination 148
The Old Stoic 149
Aye—There It Is 149
The Visionary 149
Stanzas 150
Last Lines 150

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

In a Lecture Room 151
From "Blank Misgivings" 151
Τὸ Καλόν 151
Qua Cursum Ventus 151
The New Sinai 152
The Questioning Spirit 153
Bethesda 154
From "The Bothie of Tober-Na-Vuolich" 154
Peschiera 157
Alteram Partem 157
From "Dipsychus" 157
"There is no God," the wicked saith. 157
This world is very odd, we see. 158
Say Not the Struggle Nought Availeth 158
Easter Day 158
Easter Day, II 160
Qui Laborat Orat 161
ὕμνος ἄνυμνος 161
Through a Glass Darkly 162
Ah! Yet Consider it Again 162
Come Home, Come Home 162
Green Fields of England 163
Come Back, Come Back 163
Where Lies the Land 163
With Whom is No Variableness 164
Ite Domum Saturae venit Hesperus 164
Whence Are Ye, Vague Desires 165
Oh Stream, Descending to the Sea 165
Put Forth Thy Leaf 166
Come, Poet, Come! 166
The Latest Decalogue 166
Life Is Struggle 166

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Quiet Work 167
To a Friend 167
Shakespeare 167
Mycerinus 167
The Sick King in Bokhara 170
Written in Emerson's Essays 172
To an Independent Preacher 173
To Fausta 173
The Forsaken Merman 173
Tristram and Iseult 175
Memorial Verses 185
Self-Deception 185
A Farewell 186
Isolation 187
Progress 187
From "Empedocles on Etna"
Act. I Sc. II 188
Callicles' Last Song 194
The Youth of Nature 195

PAGE

Self-Dependence . . . 196
Morality . . . 196
A Summer Night . . . 197
The Buried Life . . . 198
The Future . . . 199
Stanzas in Memory of the Author of "Obermann" . . . 200
Requiescat . . . 202
Philomela . . . 202
The Scholar-Gipsy . . . 203
Haworth Churchyard . . . 206
Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse . . . 208
To Marguerite . . . 210
Saint Brandan . . . 211
Thyrsis . . . 212
Youth and Calm . . . 216
Worldly Place . . . 216
Austerity of Poetry . . . 216
The Better Part . . . 216
Immortality . . . 217
Dover Beach . . . 217
Growing Old . . . 217
The Last Word . . . 218
Bacchanalia . . . 218
Palladium . . . 219
Rugby Chapel . . . 220
Obermann Once More . . . 221
Heine's Grave . . . 225

COVENTRY PATMORE

From *The Angel in the House*
The Paragon . . . 228
Honoria . . . 228
The Comparison . . . 229
Love Justified . . . 230
Sarum Plain . . . 230
The Abdication . . . 231
Accepted . . . 232
The Rainbow . . . 232
The Married Lover . . . 232
From *To the Unknown Eros*
St. Valentine's Day . . . 233
The Azalea . . . 233
Departure . . . 234
The Toys . . . 234
Magna Est Veritas . . . 234
If I Were Dead . . . 235
The Contract . . . 235
Sponsa Dei . . . 237

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Dante at Verona . . . 237
My Sister's Sleep . . . 242
The Blessed Damozel . . . 243
The Portrait . . . 245
The Card-Dealer . . . 246
Mary's Childhood . . . 246
The Sea-Limits . . . 247
Penumbra . . . 247
Sister Helen . . . 247
The Burden of Nineveh . . . 251
Love's Nocturn . . . 253
First Love Remembered . . . 254
Plighted Promise . . . 255
The Woodspurge . . . 255
Eden Bower . . . 255

PAGE

Troy Town 258
Love-Lily 259
Three Shadows 259
The Cloud Confines 259
From *The House of Life*
The Sonnet 260
I. Love Enthroned 260
II. Bridal Birth 260
III. Love's Testament 260
IV. Lovesight 261
V. Heart's Hope 261
VII. Supreme Surrender 261
IX. Passion and Worship 261
X. The Portrait 262
XI. The Love-Letter 262
XIII. Youth's Antiphony 262
XV. The Birth-Bond 262
XVIII. Genius in Beauty 263
XIX. Silent Noon 263
XXIV. Pride of Youth 263
XXVII. Heart's Compass 263
XXXII. Equal Troth 264
XL. Severed Selves 264
XLI. Through Death to Love 264
XLIII. Love and Hope 264
XLVIII. Death-in-Love 265
XLIX. Willowwood—I 265
L. Willowwood—II 265
LI. Willowwood—III 265
LII. Willowwood—IV 266
LIII. Without Her 266
LVI. True Woman—I. Herself 266
LVII. True Woman—II. Her Love 266
LVIII. True Woman—III. Her Heaven 267
LIX. Love's Last Gift 267
LX. Transfigured Life 267
LXII. The Soul's Sphere 267
LXV. Known in Vain 268
LXVI. The Heart of the Night 268
LXX. The Hill Summit 268
LXXI. The Choice—I 268
LXXII. The Choice—II 269
LXXIII. The Choice—III 269
LXXVII. Soul's Beauty 269
LXXVIII. Body's Beauty 269
LXXXI. Memorial Thresholds 270
LXXXII. Hoarded Joy 270
LXXXIII. Barren Spring 270
LXXXVI. Lost Days 270
XC. Retro Me, Sathana! 271
XCIV. Michelangelo's Kiss 271
XCVII. A Superscription 271
XCIX. Newborn Death—I 271
C. Newborn Death—II 272
CI. The One Hope 272
Rose Mary 272

CHRISTINA ROSETTI

Vanity of Vanities 282
Song: "When I am Dead" 282
The Three Enemies 283
An End 283
Dream Land 283
After Death 284

PAGE

Rest 284
Life Hidden 284
Remember 284
The P. R. B. 285
Paradise 285
A Birthday 285
Up-Hill 286
At Home 286
Goblin Market 286
The Prince's Progress 292
Amor Mundi 298
Italia, Io Ti Saluto 298
They Desire a Better Country 298
Bury Hope Out of Sight 299
Marvel of Marvels 299
Yea, the Sparrow Hath Found Her an House 300

WILLIAM MORRIS

The Defense of Guenevere 300
The Chapel in Lyoness 305
Concerning Geffray Teste Noire 306
The Eve of Crecy 310
The Gilliflower of Gold 310
Shameful Death 311
The Sailing of the Sword 312
The Wind 312
The Blue Closet 314
The Tune of Seven Towers 315
The Haystack in the Floods 315
Two Red Roses Across the Moon 317
In Prison 318
I know a Little Garden Close 318
From *The Earthly Paradise*
The Writing on the Image 319
Narrative Link 319
The Lady of the Land 323
Narrative Link 323
July 331
The Son of Crœsus 332
Narrative Link 332
Song from "Ogier the Dane" 340
The Day is Coming 340

EDWARD FITZGERALD

The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám 342

JAMES THOMSON

The City of Dreadful Night 351

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

From *Atalanta in Calydon*
When the Hounds of Spring 369
Before the Beginning of Years 369
We have Seen Thee, O Love 370
Not as with Sundering of the Earth 370
From "Erechtheus" 371
Laus Veneris 373
A Ballad of Life 380
Madonna Mia 381
Ilicet 382
A Leave-Taking 384
Before Dawn 384
Hymn to Proserpine 385
A Match 387
A Ballad of Burdens 388

PAGE

In Memory of Walter Savage Landor 389
The Garden of Proserpine 390
Love at Sea 391
Sapphics 391
Hertha 392
The Pilgrims 395
To Walt Whitman in America 397
From "Mater Triumphalis" 398
Mater Dolorosa 400
Cor Cordium 401
The Song of the Standard 401
A Forsaken Garden 402
A Ballad of Dreamland 403
Ave Atque Vale 404
The Last Oracle 407
A Ballad of François Villon 409
Triads 410
On the Deaths of Thomas Carlyle and George Eliot 410
A Child's Laughter 411
In Guernsey 411
A Singing Lesson 412
The Roundel 412
On a Country Road 412
On the Verge 413
On the Monument Erected to Mazzini 413
In a Rosary 414
A Channel Passage 415
The Lake of Gaube 417
Northumberland 418
Burns: an Ode 419

WILLIAM SCHWENK GILBERT

The Yarn of the Nancy Bell 420
To My Bride 421
The Bishop of Rum-Ti-Foo 422
Captain Reece 423
Gentle Alice Brown 424
The Perils of Invisibility 425

GEORGE MEREDITH

The Woods of Westermain 427
The Nuptials of Attila 431
Juggling Jerry 436
Phoebus with Admetus 438
The Lark Ascending 440
Melampus 441
Love in the Valley 443
Lucifer in Starlight 447
Outer and Inner 447
Nature and Life 448
Dirge in Woods 448
Meditation Under Stars 448
The Vital Choice 449
With the Huntress 449

THOMAS EDWARD BROWN

Braddan Vicarage 450
St. Bee's Head 451
An Oxford Idyll 452
Jessie 452
Dora 452
My Garden 452
Epistola ad Dakyns 453
Chalse A Killey 454
The Peel Life-Boat 456

PAGE

Catherine Kinrade 456
Mater Dolorosa 457

ARTHUR WILLIAM EDGAR O'SHAUGHNESSY

Salome 458
The Fountain of Tears 458
From "Chaitivel" 459
Ode: We are the Music Makers 460
Song: I Made Another Garden 460
Song: Has Summer Come Without the Rose? 461
Song: World, is there one good thing in you? 461
Song of Palms 461
A Love Symphony 461

WILFRED SCAWEN BLUNT

From *The Love Sonnets of Proteus*
Dedication. To Robert, Lord Lytton. I 462
Part I.—To Manon. II-XXI 462–466
From Part III.—Gods and False Gods. LV, LXIX, LXXI 467
From *The Love Lyrics of Proteus*
A Nocturne 467
Song: Wilt thou take me for thy slave? 468
The Stricken Hart 468
Song.—Not a Word 468
Song: You have let the beauty of the day go over 468
From "Esther" 469

ROBERT BRIDGES

From "The Growth of Love" 469
Poor Withered Rose and Dry 469
Triolet 470
Triolet 470
A Passer-By 470
Late Spring Evening 470
Wooing 471
There is a Hill Beside the Silver Thames 472
Haste On, My Joys! Your Treasure Lies 472
The Clouds Have Left the Sky 473
Angel Spirits of Sleep 473
The Snow Lies Sprinkled on the Beach 473
Nightingales 473
I Have Loved Flowers that Fade 474
I Love All Beauteous Things 474
My Delight and thy Delight 474
Pater Filio 474

HENRY AUSTIN DOBSON

A Dead Letter 475
A Gentlewoman of the Old School 476
Tu Quoque 477
A Dialogue from Plato 478
The Idyll of the Carp 479
The Child-Musician 481
The Cradle 481
The Ballad à-la-Mode 481
The Secrets of the Heart 482
Good-night, Babette! 484
Rose-Leaves 485
Ars Victrix 486
On the Hurry of This Time 486
To an Intrusive Butterfly 486
To a Missal of the Thirteenth Century 487
On a Fan 487
When Burbadge Played 488
A Dialogue to the Memory of Mr. Alexander Pope 488

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON PAGE

From *A Child's Garden of Verses*
Young Night Thought . . . 489
Foreign Lands . . . 490
Travel . . . 490
The Land of Nod . . . 490
The Cow . . . 490
The Wind . . . 491
Time to Rise . . . 491
The Land of Story-Books . . . 491
The Little Land . . . 491
Nest Eggs . . . 492
To Any Reader . . . 492
From *Underwoods*
Requiem . . . 492
The Celestial Surgeon . . . 492
In the States . . . 493
In the Highlands . . . 493
Sing Me a Song . . . 493

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

From *In Hospital*
Enter Patient . . . 494
Staff-Nurse: Old Style . . . 494
Scrubber . . . 494
Ballade of Youth and Age . . . 495
Ballade of Dead Actors . . . 495
Orientale . . . 495
When You Are Old . . . 495
Beside the Idle Summer Sea . . . 496
We Shall Surely Die . . . 496
What Is to Come We Know Not . . . 496
To My Mother . . . 496
Life is Bitter . . . 497
R. T. Hamilton Bruce: Out of the night . . . 497
I Am the Reaper . . . 497
The Sands are Alive . . . 497
To A. D. . . . 498
To R. L. S. . . . 498
The Ways are Green . . . 498
To K. de M. . . . 498
Margaritæ Sorori . . . 499
To W. A. . . . 499
From "London Voluntaries"
No. I. Grave . . . 499
No. II. Andante con moto . . . 500
No. III. Scherzando . . . 501
As Like the Woman as You Can . . . 502
Midsummer Midnight Skies . . . 502
Under a Stagnant Sky . . . 503
Fresh from His Fastnesses . . . 503
Space and Dread and the Dark . . . 504

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Daisy . . . 504
The Poppy . . . 505
The Making of Viola . . . 506
Scala Jacobi Portaque Eburnea . . . 507
Before Her Portrait in Youth . . . 507
The Hound of Heaven . . . 508
To the Dead Cardinal of Westminster . . . 510
A Fallen Yew . . . 512
From "Sister Songs" . . . 513
Ode to the Setting Sun . . . 514
Field-Flower . . . 517

PAGE

Pastoral 518

ERNEST DOWSON

Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration 518
Amor Profanus 519
Yvonne of Brittany 519
Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae 520
Beata Solitudo 520
Gray Nights 520
Amantium Iræ 521
Cease Smiling, Dear 521
Seraphita 522
Chanson Sans Paroles 522
The Dead Child 522
Carthusians 523
Villanelle of the Poet's Road 523
Villanelle of Acheron 524
To His Mistress 524
In a Breton Cemetery 524
A Last Word 524

ARTHUR SYMONS

Night and Wind 525
On the Beach 525
Requies 525
In an Omnibus 525
Emmy 526
In Carnival 526
Renée 526
Sleepless Night 527
The Wanderers 527
Why? 527
The Return 528
The Destroying Angel 528
The Old Women 528
The Unloved 529
Rosa Flammea 529
Venetian Night 530
Haschisch 530
The Loom of Dreams 531

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

From "The Wanderings of Usheen" 531
The Stolen Child 533
Fergus and the Druid 534
The Host of the Air 535
He Remembers Forgotten Beauty 535

ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN

From "A Shropshire Lad," Nos. II, IV, V, VII, IX, XI, XII, XIII, XIX, XXI, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XLIII, XLV, LI, LIV, LV, LXII . . . 536–541

RUDYARD KIPLING

The King 542
The Ballad of East and West 542
Recessional 544
Song of the Wise Children 545

CENTURY READINGS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY POETS

SAMUEL ROGERS (1763-1855)

A WISH

(1786)

Mine be a cot beside the hill;
A bee-hive's hum shall soothe my ear;
A willowy brook, that turns a mill,
With many a fall shall linger near.

The swallow, oft, beneath my thatch,
Shall twitter from her clay-built nest;
Oft shall the pilgrim lift the latch,
And share my meal, a welcome guest.

Around my ivy'd porch shall spring
Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew;
And Lucy, at her wheel, shall sing
In russet gown and apron blue.

The village-church, among the trees,
Where first our marriage-vows were given,
With merry peals shall swell the breeze,
And point with taper spire to heaven.

AN ITALIAN SONG

(1793)

Dear is my little native vale,
The ring-dove builds and murmurs there;
Close by my cot she tells her tale
To every passing villager.
The squirrel leaps from tree to tree,
And shells his nuts at liberty.

In orange-groves and myrtle-bowers,
That breathe a gale of fragrance round,
I charm the fairy-footed hours
With my loved lute's romantic sound;
Or crowns of living laurel weave,
For those that win the race at eve.

The shepherd's horn at break of day,
The ballet danced in twilight glade,
The canzonet and roundelay
Sung in the silent green-wood shade:
These simple joys, that never fail,
Shall bind me to my native vale.

WRITTEN IN THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND

(1812)

Blue was the loch, the clouds were gone,
Ben-Lomond in his glory shone,
When, Luss, I left thee; when the breeze
Bore me from thy silver sands,
Thy kirk-yard wall among the trees,
Where, grey with age, the dial stands;
That dial so well-known to me!
—Tho' many a shadow it had shed,
Beloved Sister, since with thee
The legend on the stone was read.[1]
The fairy-isles fled far away;
That with its woods and uplands green,
Where shepherd-huts are dimly seen,
And songs are heard at close of day;
That too, the deer's wild covert, fled,
And that, the asylum of the dead:
While, as the boat went merrily,
Much of Rob Roy the boat-man told;
His arm that fell below his knee,
His cattle-ford and mountain-hold.
Tarbat,[2] thy shore I climbed at last;
And, thy shady region passed,
Upon another shore I stood,
And looked upon another flood;[3]
Great Ocean's self! ('Tis He who fills
That vast and awful depth of hills;)
Where many an elf was playing round,
Who treads unshod his classic ground;
And speaks, his native rocks among,
As Fingal spoke, and Ossian sung.
Night fell; and dark and darker grew
That narrow sea, that narrow sky,
As o'er the glimmering waves we flew;
The sea-bird rustling, wailing by.
And now the grampus, half-descried,
Black and huge above the tide;
The cliffs and promontories there,
Front to front, and broad and bare;

1 His sister Sarah.
2 Meaning in Gaelic an Isthmus.
3 Loch-Long.

Each beyond each, with giant-feet
Advancing as in haste to meet;
The shattered fortress, whence the Dane
Blew his shrill blast, nor rushed in vain,
Tyrant of the drear domain;
All into midnight-shadow sweep—
When day springs upward from the deep
Kindling the waters in its flight,
The prow wakes splendor; and the oar,
That rose and fell unseen before,
Flashes in a sea of light!
Glad sign, and sure! for now we hail
Thy flowers, Glenfinnart, in the gale;
And bright indeed the path should be,
That leads to Friendship and to Thee!
  Oh blest retreat, and sacred too!
Sacred as when the bell of prayer
Tolled duly on the desert air,
And crosses decked thy summits blue.
Oft, like some loved romantic tale,
Oft shall my weary mind recall,
Amid the hum and stir of men.
Thy beechen grove and waterfall,
Thy ferry with its gliding sail,
And Her—the Lady of the glen!

THE BOY OF EGREMOND

(1819)

"Say, what remains when Hope is fled?"
She answered, "Endless weeping!"
For in the herdsman's eye she read
Who in his shroud lay sleeping.
  At Embsay rung the matin-bell,
The stag was roused on Barden-fell;
The mingled sounds were swelling, dying,
And down the Wharfe a hern was flying;
When near the cabin in the wood,
In tartan clad and forest-green,
With hound in leash and hawk in hood,
The Boy of Egremond was seen.
Blithe was his song, a song of yore;
But where the rock is rent in two,
And the river rushes through,
His voice was heard no more!
'Twas but a step! the gulf he passed;
But that step—it was his last!
As through the mist he winged his way,
(A cloud that hovers night and day,)
The hound hung back, and back he drew
The Master and his merlin[1] too.
That narrow place of noise and strife
Received their little all of Life!

  There now the matin-bell is rung;
The "Miserere!" duly sung;
And holy men in cowl and hood
Are wandering up and down the wood.

1 Falcon.

But what avail they? Ruthless Lord,[2]
Thou didst not shudder when the sword
Here on the young its fury spent,
The helpless and the innocent.
Sit now and answer, groan for groan.
The child before thee is thy own.
And she who wildly wanders there,
The mother in her long despair,
Shall oft remind thee, waking, sleeping,
Of those who by the Wharfe were weeping;
Of those who would not be consoled
When red with blood the river rolled.

2 The father of the Boy of Egremond had ravaged the region mercilessly, and afterward had been placed in power there by King David of Scotland.

From *HUMAN LIFE*

(1819)

THE STATESMAN IN RETIREMENT

And now once more where most he loved to be,
In his own fields—breathing tranquillity—
We hail him—not less happy, Fox, than thee. . . .
How oft from grove to grove, from seat to seat,
With thee conversing in thy loved retreat,
I saw the sun go down! . . . Thy bell has tolled!
—But in thy place among us we behold
One who resembles thee.
'Tis the sixth hour.
The village-clock strikes from the distant tower.
The ploughman leaves the field; the traveller hears,
And to the inn spurs forward. Nature wears
Her sweetest smile; the day-star in the west
Yet hovering, and the thistle's-down at rest.
  And such, his labor done, the calm He knows,
Whose footsteps we have follow'd. Round him glows
An atmosphere that brightens to the last;
The light, that shines, reflected from the Past,
—And from the Future, too! Active in Thought
Among old books, old friends; and not unsought
By the wise stranger—in his morning-hours,

When gentle airs stir the fresh-blowing flowers,
He muses, turning up the idle weed;
Or prunes or grafts, or in the yellow mead
Watches his bees at hiving-time; and now,
The ladder resting on the orchard-bough,
Culls the delicious fruit that hangs in air,
The purple plum, green fig, or golden pear,
Mid sparkling eyes, and hands uplifted there.
At night, when all, assembling round the fire,
Closer and closer draw till they retire,
A tale is told of India or Japan,
Of merchants from Golconde or Astracan,
What time wild Nature revell'd unrestrain'd,
And Sinbad voyaged and the Caliphs reigned:—
Of Knights renown'd from Holy Palestine,
And Minstrels, such as swept the lyre divine,
When Blondel came, and Richard in his Cell
Heard as he lay the song he knew so well:—
Of some Norwegian, while the icy gale
Rings in her shrouds and beats her iron-sail,
Among the shining Alps of Polar seas
Immovable—for ever there to freeze!
Or some great Caravan, from well to well
Winding as darkness on the desert fell,
In their long march, such as the Prophet bids,
To Mecca from the Land of Pyramids,
And in an instant lost—a hollow wave
Of burning sand their everlasting grave!—
Now the scene shifts to Cashmere—to a glade
Where, with her loved gazelle, the dark-eyed Maid
(Her fragrant chamber for awhile resign'd,
Her lute, by fits discoursing with the wind)
Wanders well-pleased, what time the Nightingale
Sings to the Rose, rejoicing hill and dale;
And now to Venice—to a bridge, a square,
Glittering with light, all nations masking there,
With light reflected on the tremulous tide,
Where gondolas in gay confusion glide,
Answering the jest, the song on every side;
To Naples next—and at the crowded gate,
Where Grief and Fear and wild Amazement wait,
Lo, on his back a Son brings in his Sire,
Vesuvius blazing like a world on fire!—
Then, at a sign that never was forgot,
A strain breaks forth (who hears and loves it not?)
From harp or organ! 'Tis at parting given,
That in their slumbers they may dream of Heaven;
Young voices mingling, as it floats along,
In Tuscan air or Handel's sacred song!
And She inspires, whose beauty shines in all;
So soon to weave a daughter's coronal,
And at the nuptial rite smile through her tears;—
So soon to hover round her full of fears,
And with assurance sweet her soul revive
In child birth—when a mother's love is most alive.
No, 'tis not here that Solitude is known.
Through the wide world he only is alone
Who lives not for another. Come what will,
The generous man has his companion still.

From *ITALY*

(1822–1834)

MEILLERIE

These grey majestic cliffs that tower to heaven,
These glimmering glades and open chestnut groves,
That echo to the heifer's wandering bell,
Or woodman's axe, or steersman's song beneath,
As on he urges his fir-laden bark,
Or shout of goat-herd boy above them all,
Who loves not? And who blesses not the light,
When thro' some loop-hole he surveys the lake
Blue as a sapphire-stone, and richly set
With châteaux, villages, and village-spires,
Orchards and vineyards, alps and alpine snows?
Here would I dwell; nor visit, but in thought,
Ferney[1] far south, silent and empty now

1 Home of Voltaire.

As now thy once-luxurious bowers, Ripaille;[1]
Vevey, so long an exiled Patriot's[2] home.
Or Chillon's dungeon-floors beneath the wave,
Channelled and worn by pacing to and fro;
Lausanne, where Gibbon in his sheltered walk
Nightly called up the Shade of ancient Rome;
Or Coppet,[3] and that dark untrodden grove[4]
Sacred to Virtue, and a daughter's tears!
Here would I dwell, forgetting and forgot;
And oft methinks (of such strange potency
The spells that Genius scatters where he will)
Oft should I wander forth like one in search,
And say, half-dreaming, "Here St. Preux[5] has stood!"
Then, turn and gaze on Clarens.
Yet there is,
Within an eagle's flight and less, a scene
Still nobler if not fairer (once again
Would I behold it ere these eyes are closed,
For I can say, "I also have been there!")
That Sacred Lake[6] withdrawn among the hills,
Its depth of waters flanked as with a wall
Built by the Giant-race before the flood;
Where not a cross or chapel but inspires
Holy delight, lifting our thoughts to God
From God-like men,—men in a barbarous age
That dared assert their birth-right, and displayed
Deeds half-divine, returning good for ill;
That in the desert sowed the seeds of life,
Framed a band of small Republics there,
Which still exist, the envy of the world!
Who would not land in each, and tread the ground;
Land where Tell leaped ashore; and climb to drink
Of the three hallowed fountains? He that does,
Comes back the better; and relates at home
That he was met and greeted by a race
Such as he read of in his boyish days;
Such as Miltiades at Marathon
Led, when he chased the Persians to their ships.

There, while the well-known boat is heaving in,
Piled with rude merchandise, or launching forth,
Thronged with wild cattle for Italian fairs,
There in the sunshine, 'mid their native snows,
Children, let loose from school, contend to use
The cross-bow of their fathers; and o'er-run
The rocky field where all, in every age,
Assembling sit, like one great family,
Forming alliances, enacting laws;
Each cliff and head-land and green promontory
Graven to their eyes with records of the past
That prompt to hero-worship, and excite
Even in the least, the lowliest, as he toils,
A reverence nowhere else or felt or feigned;
Their chronicler great Nature; and the volume
Vast as her works—above, below, around!
The fisher on thy beach, Thermopylæ,
Asks of the lettered stranger why he came,
First from his lips to learn the glorious truth!
And who that whets his scythe in Runnemede,[7]
Though but for them a slave, recalls to mind
The barons in array, with their great charter?
Among the everlasting Alps alone,
There to burn on as in a sanctuary,
Bright and unsullied lives th' ethereal flame;
And 'mid those scenes unchanged, unchangeable.
Why should it ever die?

COLL'ALTO

"In this neglected mirror (the broad frame
Of massy silver serves to testify
That many a noble matron of the house
Has sat before it) once, alas, was seen
What led to many sorrows. From that time

1 The retreat of Amadeus, the first Duke of Savoy.
2 Ludlow.
3 Home of Mde. de Stael.
4 The burial-place of Necker.
5 One of Rousseau's heroes.
6 The Lake of the Four Cantons.

7 Here King John granted the Great Charter to the English nobles.

The bat came hither for a sleeping place;
And he, who cursed another in his heart,
Said, 'Be thy dwelling, thro' the day and night,
Shunned like Coll'alto.' "—'Twas in that old Pile,
Which flanks the cliff with its grey battlements
Flung here and there, and, like an eagle's nest,
Hangs in the Trevisan, that thus the Steward,
Shaking his locks, the few that Time had left,
Addressed me, as we entered what was called
"My Lady's Chamber." On the walls, the chairs,
Much yet remained of the rich tapestry;
Much of the adventures of Sir Lancelot
In the green glades of some enchanted wood.
The toilet-table was of silver wrought,
Florentine Art, when Florence was renowned;
A gay confusion of the elements,
Dolphins and boys, and shells and fruits and flowers:
And from the ceiling, in his gilded cage,
Hung a small bird of curious workmanship,
That when his Mistress bade him, would unfold
(So says the babbling Dame, Tradition, there)
His emerald-wings, and sing and sing again
The song that pleased her. While I stood and looked,
A gleam of day yet lingering in the West,
The Steward went on. "She had ('tis now long since)
A gentle serving-maid, the fair Cristine,
Fair as a lily, and as spotless too;
None so admired, beloved. They had grown up
As play-fellows; and some there were, that said,
Some that knew much, discoursing of Cristine.
'She is not what she seems.' When unrequired,
She would steal forth; her custom, her delight,
To wander thro' and thro' an ancient grove
Self-planted half-way down, losing herself
Like one in love with sadness; and her veil
And vesture white, seen ever in that place,
Ever as surely as the hours came round,
Among those reverend trees, gave her below
The name of The White Lady. But the day
Is gone, and I delay thee.
In that chair
The Countess, as it might be now, was sitting,
Her gentle serving-maid, the fair Cristine,
Combing her golden hair; and thro' this door
The Count, her lord, was hastening, called away
By letters of great urgency to Venice;
When in the glass she saw, as she believed,
('Twas an illusion of the Evil One—
Some say he came and crossed it at the time)
A smile, a glance at parting, given and answered,
That turned her blood to gall. That very night
The deed was done. That night, ere yet the Moon
Was up on Monte Calvo, and the wolf
Baying as still he does (oft is he heard,
An hour and more, by the old turret-clock)
They led her forth, the unhappy lost Cristine,
Helping her down in her distress—to die.
"No blood was spilt; no instrument of death
Lurked—or stood forth, declaring its bad purpose;
Nor was a hair of her unblemished head
Hurt in that hour. Fresh as a flower just blown,
And warm with life, her youthful pulses playing,
She was walled up within the Castle-wall.
The wall itself was hollowed secretly;
Then closed again, and done to line and rule.
Would'st thou descend?——'Tis in a darksome vault
Under the Chapel: and there nightly now.
As in the narrow niche, when smooth and fair,
And as if nothing had been done or thought,
The stone-work rose before her, till the light
Glimmered and went—there, nightly at that hour,
(Thou smil'st, and would it were an idle tale!)
In her white veil and vesture white she stands

Shuddering—her eyes uplifted, and her hands
Joined as in prayer; then, like a Blessed Soul
Bursting the tomb, springs forward, and away
Flies o'er the woods and mountains. Issuing forth,
The hunter meets her in his hunting-track;
The shepherd on the heath, starting, exclaims
(For still she bears the name she bore of old)
'' 'Tis the White Lady!' ''

THOMAS CAMPBELL (1777–1844)

From "PLEASURES OF HOPE"

(1799)

At summer eve, when Heaven's ethereal bow
Spans with bright arch the glittering hills below,
Why to yon mountain turns the musing eye,
Whose sunbright summit mingles with the sky?
Why do those cliffs of shadowy tint appear
More sweet than all the landscape smiling near?—
'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
And robes the mountain in its azure hue.
Thus, with delight, we linger to survey
The promised joys of life's unmeasured way;
Thus, from afar, each dim-discover'd scene
More pleasing seems than all the past hath been,
And every form, that Fancy can repair
From dark oblivion, glows divinely there.
What potent spirit guides the raptured eye
To pierce the shades of dim futurity?
Can Wisdom lend, with all her heavenly power,
The pledge of Joy's anticipated hour?
Ah, no! she darkly sees the fate of man—
Her dim horizon bounded to a span;
Or, if she hold an image to the view,
'Tis Nature pictured too severely true.
With thee, sweet HOPE! resides the heavenly light,
That pours remotest rapture on the sight:
Thine is the charm of life's bewilder'd way,
That calls each slumbering passion into play.
Waked by thy touch, I see the sister band,
On tiptoe watching, start at thy command,
And fly where'er thy mandate bids them steer,
To Pleasure's path or Glory's bright career.
Primeval HOPE, the Aönian Muses say,
When Man and Nature mourn'd their first decay;
When every form of death, and every woe,
Shot from malignant stars to earth below;
When Murder bared her arm, and rampant War
Yoked the red dragons of her iron car;
When Peace and Mercy, banish'd from the plain,
Sprung on the viewless winds to Heaven again;
All, all forsook the friendless, guilty mind,
But HOPE, the charmer, linger'd still behind.
Thus, while Elijah's burning wheels prepare
From Carmel's heights to sweep the fields of air,
The prophet's mantle, ere his flight began,
Dropt on the world—a sacred gift to man,
Auspicious HOPE! in thy sweet garden grow
Wreaths for each toil, a charm for every woe;
Won by their sweets, in Nature's languid hour,
The way-worn pilgrim seeks thy summer bower;
There, as the wild bee murmurs on the wing,
What peaceful dreams thy handmaid spirits bring!
What viewless forms th' Æolian organ play,

And sweep the furrow'd lines of anxious thought away.
Angel of life! thy glittering wings explore
Earth's loneliest bounds, and Ocean's wildest shore!
Lo! to the wintry winds the pilot yields
His bark careering o'er unfathom'd fields;
Now on Atlantic waves he rides afar,
Where Andes, giant of the western star,
With meteor-standard to the winds unfurl'd,
Looks from his throne of clouds o'er half the world!
Now far he sweeps, where scarce a summer smiles,
On Behring's rocks, or Greenland's naked isles:
Cold on his midnight watch the breezes blow,
From wastes that slumber in eternal snow;
And waft, across the waves' tumultuous roar,
The wolf's long howl from Oonalaska's shore.
Poor child of danger, nursling of the storm,
Sad are the woes that wreck thy manly form!
Rocks, waves, and winds, the shatter'd bark delay;
Thy heart is sad, thy home is far away.
But Hope can here her moonlight vigils keep,
And sing to charm the spirit of the deep:
Swift as yon streamer lights the starry pole,
Her visions warm the watchman's pensive soul;
His native hills that rise in happier climes,
The grot that heard his song of other times,
His cottage home, his bark of slender sail,
His glassy lake, and broomwood-blossom'd vale,
Rush on his thought; he sweeps before the wind,
Treads the loved shore he sigh'd to leave behind;
Meets at each step a friend's familiar face,
And flies at last to Helen's long embrace;
Wipes from her cheek the rapture-speaking tear!
And clasps, with many a sigh, his children dear!
While, long neglected, but at length caress'd,
His faithful dog salutes the smiling guest,
Points to the master's eyes (where'er they roam)
His wistful face, and whines a welcome home.

YE MARINERS OF ENGLAND:

(1801)

A NAVAL ODE

I

Ye Mariners of England!
That guard our native seas;
Whose flag has braved, a thousand years,
The battle and the breeze!
Your glorious standard launch again
To match another foe!
And sweep through the deep,
While the stormy winds do blow;
While the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.

II

The spirits of your fathers
Shall start from every wave!—
For the deck it was their field of fame,
And Ocean was their grave:
Where Blake and mighty Nelson fell,
Your manly hearts shall glow,
As ye sweep through the deep,
While the stormy winds do blow,
While the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.

III

Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain-waves,
Her home is on the deep.
With thunders from her native oak,
She quells the floods below,—
As they roar on the shore,
When the stormy winds do blow:
When the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.

IV

The meteor flag of England
Shall yet terrific burn;
Till danger's troubled night depart,
And the star of peace return.

Then, then, ye ocean-warriors!
Our song and feast shall flow
To the fame of your name,
When the storm has ceased to blow;
When the fiery fight is heard no more,
And the storm has ceased to blow.

LOCHIEL'S WARNING

(1802)

WIZARD—LOCHIEL

WIZARD

Lochiel, Lochiel! beware of the day
When the lowlands shall meet thee in battle array!
For a field of the dead rushes red on my sight,
And the clans of Culloden are scatter'd in fight.
They rally, they bleed, for their kingdom and crown;
Woe, woe to the riders that trample them down!
Proud Cumberland prances, insulting the slain,
And their hoof-beaten bosoms are trod to the plain.
But hark! through the fast-flashing lightning of war,
What steed to the desert flies frantic and far?
'Tis thine, oh Glenullin! whose bride shall await,
Like a love-lighted watch-fire, all night at the gate.
A steed comes at morning: no rider is there;
But its bridle is red with the sign of despair.
Weep, Albin! to death and captivity led!
Oh weep, but thy tears cannot number the dead:
For a merciless sword on Culloden shall wave,
Culloden! that reeks with the blood of the brave.

LOCHIEL

Go, preach to the coward, thou death-telling seer!
Or, if gory Culloden so dreadful appear,
Draw, dotard, around thy old wavering sight
This mantle, to cover the phantoms of fright.

WIZARD

Ha! laugh'st thou, Lochiel, my vision to scorn?
Proud bird of the mountain, thy plume shall be torn!
Say, rush'd the bold eagle exultingly forth,
From his home, in the dark rolling clouds of the north?
Lo! the death-shot of foemen outspeeding, he rode
Companionless, bearing destruction abroad;
But down let him stoop from his havoc on high!
Ah! home let him speed,—for the spoiler is nigh.
Why flames the far summit? Why shoot to the blast
Those embers, like stars from the firmament cast?
'Tis the fire-shower of ruin, all dreadfully driven
From his eyrie, that beacons the darkness of heaven.
Oh, crested Lochiel! the peerless in might,
Whose banners arise on the battlements' height,
Heaven's fire is around thee, to blast and to burn;
Return to thy dwelling! all lonely return!
For the blackness of ashes shall mark where it stood,
And a wild mother scream o'er her famishing brood.

LOCHIEL

False Wizard, avaunt! I have marshall'd my clan,
Their swords are a thousand, their bosoms are one!
They are true to the last of their blood and their breath,
And like reapers descend to the harvest of death.
Then welcome be Cumberland's steed to the shock!
Let him dash his proud foam like a wave on the rock!
But woe to his kindred, and woe to his cause,
When Albin her claymore indignantly draws;
When her bonneted chieftains to victory crowd,
Clanronald the dauntless, and Moray the proud,

All plaided and plumed in their tartan array—

WIZARD

—Lochiel, Lochiel! beware of the day;
For, dark and despairing, my sight I may seal,
But man cannot cover what God would reveal;
'Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,
And coming events cast their shadows before.
I tell thee, Culloden's dread echoes shall ring
With the bloodhounds that bark for thy fugitive king.
Lo! anointed by Heaven with the vials of wrath,
Behold, where he flies on his desolate path!
Now in darkness and billows, he sweeps from my sight:
Rise, rise! ye wild tempest, and cover his flight!
'Tis finish'd. Their thunders are hush'd on the moors:
Culloden is lost, and my country deplores.
But where is the iron-bound prisoner? where?
For the red eye of battle is shut in despair.
Say, mounts he the ocean-wave, banish'd, forlorn,
Like a limb from his country cast bleeding and torn?
Ah no! for a darker departure is near;
The war-drum is muffled, and black is the bier;
His death-bell is tolling: oh! mercy, dispel
Yon sight, that it freezes my spirit to tell!
Life flutters convulsed in his quivering limbs,
And his blood-streaming nostril in agony swims.
Accursed be the fagots, that blaze at his feet,
Where his heart shall be thrown, ere it ceases to beat,
With the smoke of its ashes to poison the gale—

LOCHIEL

—Down, soothless insulter! I trust not the tale:
For never shall Albin a destiny meet,
So black with dishonor, so foul with retreat.
Tho' my perishing ranks should be strew'd in their gore,
Like ocean-weeds heap'd on the surf-beaten shore,
Lochiel, untainted by flight or by chains,
While the kindling of life in his bosom remains,
Shall victor exult, or in death be laid low,
With his back to the field, and his feet to the foe!
And leaving in battle no blot on his name,
Look proudly to Heaven from the death-bed of fame.

HOHENLINDEN

(1802)

On Linden, when the sun was low,
All bloodless lay the untrodden snow,
And dark as winter was the flow
Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

But Linden saw another sight,
When the drum beat, at dead of night,
Commanding fires of death to light
The darkness of her scenery.

By torch and trumpet fast array'd,
Each horseman drew his battle-blade,
And furious every charger neigh'd,
To join the dreadful revelry.

Then shook the hills with thunder riven,
Then rush'd the steed to battle driven,
And louder than the bolts of heaven,
Far flash'd the red artillery.

But redder yet that light shall glow
On Linden's hills of stainèd snow,
And bloodier yet the torrent flow
Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

'Tis morn, but scarce yon level sun
Can pierce the war-clouds, rolling dun,
Where furious Frank, and fiery Hun,
Shout in their sulphurous canopy.

The combat deepens. On, ye brave,
Who rush to glory, or the grave!
Wave, Munich! all thy banners wave,
And charge with all thy chivalry!

Few, few, shall part where many meet!
The snow shall be their winding-sheet,
And every turf beneath their feet
Shall be a soldier's sepulchre.

LORD ULLIN'S DAUGHTER

(1809)

A chieftain, to the Highlands bound,
Cries, "Boatman, do not tarry!
And I'll give thee a silver pound,
To row us o'er the ferry."

"Now who be ye, would cross Lochgyle,
This dark and stormy water?"
"O, I'm the chief of Ulva's isle,
And this, Lord Ullin's daughter.

"And fast before her father's men
Three days we've fled together,
For should he find us in the glen,
My blood would stain the heather.

"His horsemen hard behind us ride;
Should they our steps discover,
Then who will cheer my bonny bride
When they have slain her lover?"

Out spoke the hardy Highland wight,
"I'll go, my chief; I'm ready:
It is not for your silver bright;
But for your winsome lady.

"And by my word! the bonny bird
In danger shall not tarry;
So though the waves are raging white,
I'll row you o'er the ferry."

By this the storm grew loud apace,
The water wraith was shrieking;
And in the scowl of heaven each face
Grew dark as they were speaking.

But still as wilder blew the wind,
And as the night grew drearer,
Adown the glen rode armed men—
Their trampling sounded nearer.

"O haste thee, haste!" the lady cries,
"Though tempests round us gather;
I'll meet the raging of the skies,
But not an angry father."

The boat has left a stormy land,
A stormy sea before her,—
When, oh! too strong for human hand,
The tempest gathered o'er her.

And still they row'd amidst the roar
Of waters fast prevailing:
Lord Ullin reach'd that fatal shore—
His wrath was changed to wailing.

For sore dismay'd, through storm and shade,
His child he did discover:
One lovely hand she stretch'd for aid,
And one was round her lover.

"Come back! come back!" he cried in grief,
"Across this stormy water;
And I'll forgive your Highland chief,
My daughter! oh, my daughter!"

'Twas vain;—the loud waves lash'd the shore,
Return or aid preventing:
The waters wild went o'er his child,
And he was left lamenting.

BATTLE OF THE BALTIC

(*1804–1805*, 1809)

I

Of Nelson and the North,
Sing the glorious day's renown,
When to battle fierce came forth
All the might of Denmark's crown,
And her arms along the deep proudly shone;
By each gun the lighted brand,
In a bold determined hand,
And the Prince of all the land
Led them on.—

II

Like leviathans afloat,
Lay their bulwarks on the brine;
While the sign of battle flew
On the lofty British line:
It was ten of April morn by the chime:
As they drifted on their path,
There was silence deep as death;
And the boldest held his breath,
For a time.—

III

But the might of England flush'd
To anticipate the scene;
And her van the fleeter rush'd
O'er the deadly space between.
"Hearts of oak!" our captain cried; when each gun
From its adamantine lips
Spread a death-shade round the ships,

Like the hurricane eclipse
Of the sun.

IV

Again! again! again!
And the havoc did not slack,
Till a feeble cheer the Dane
To our cheering sent us back;—
Their shots along the deep slowly boom:—
Then ceased—and all is wail,
As they strike the shatter'd sail;
Or, in conflagration pale,
Light the gloom.—

V

Out spoke the victor then,
As he hail'd them o'er the wave;
"Ye are brothers! ye are men!
And we conquer but to save:—
So peace instead of death let us bring;
But yield, proud foe, thy fleet,
With the crews, at England's feet,
And make submission meet
To our King."—

VI

Then Denmark bless'd our chief,
That he gave her wounds repose;
And the sounds of joy and grief
From her people wildly rose,
As death withdrew his shades from the day.
While the sun look'd smiling bright
O'er a wide and woeful sight,
Where the fires of funeral light
Died away.

VII

Now joy, Old England, raise!
For the tidings of thy might,
By the festal cities' blaze,
Whilst the wine-cup shines in light;
And yet amidst that joy and uproar,
Let us think of them that sleep,
Full many a fathom deep,
By thy wild and stormy steep,
Elsinore!

VIII

Brave hearts! to Britain's pride
Once so faithful and so true,
On the deck of fame that died;—
With the gallant good Riou; [1]
Soft sigh the winds of Heaven o'er their grave!
While the billow mournful rolls,
And the mermaid's song condoles,
Singing glory to the souls
Of the brave!

1 Captain Riou, justly entitled the gallant and the good by Lord Nelson, when he wrote home his despatches.

From *GERTRUDE OF WYOMING*

(1809)

THE SONG OF OUTALISSI

"And I could weep;"—th' Oneyda chief
His descant wildly thus begun:
"But that I may not stain with grief
The death-song of my father's son,
Or bow this head in woe!
For by my wrongs, and by my wrath!
To-morrow Areouski's [2] breath,
(That fires yon heaven with storms of death,)
Shall light us to the foe:
And we shall share, my Christian boy!
The foeman's blood, the avenger's joy!

But thee, my flower, whose breath was given
By milder genii o'er the deep,
The spirits of the white man's heaven
Forbid not thee to weep:—
Nor will the Christian host,
Nor will thy father's spirit grieve,
To see thee, on the battle's eve,
Lamenting, take a mournful leave
Of her who loved thee most:
She was the rainbow to thy sight!
Thy sun—thy heaven—of lost delight!

To-morrow let us do or die!
But when the bolt of death is hurl'd,
Ah! whither then with thee to fly,
Shall Outalissi roam the world?
Seek we thy once-loved home?
The hand is gone that cropt its flowers:
Unheard their clock repeats its hours!
Cold is the hearth within their bowers!
And should we thither roam,
Its echoes, and its empty tread,
Would sound like voices from the dead!

Or shall we cross yon mountains blue,
Whose streams my kindred nation quaff'd,
And by my side, in battle true,
A thousand warriors drew the shaft?
Ah! there, in desolation cold,
The desert serpent dwells alone,

2 The Indian war-god.

Where grass o'ergrows each mouldering bone,
And stones themselves to ruin grown,
Like me, are death-like old.
Then seek we not their camp,—for there—
The silence dwells of my despair!

But hark, the trump!—to-morrow thou
In glory's fires shall dry thy tears;
Ev'n from the land of shadows now
My father's awful ghost appears,
Amidst the clouds that round us roll;
He bids my soul for battle thirst—
He bids me dry the last—the first—
The only tears that ever burst
From Outalissi's soul;
Because I may not stain with grief
The death-song of an Indian chief!"

THE LAST MAN

(1823)

All worldly shapes shall melt in gloom,
The Sun himself must die,
Before this mortal shall assume
Its Immortality!
I saw a vision in my sleep,
That gave my spirit strength to sweep
Adown the gulf of Time!
I saw the last of human mould
That shall Creation's death behold,
As Adam saw her prime!

The Sun's eye had a sickly glare,
The Earth with age was wan,
The skeletons of nations were
Around that lonely man!
Some had expired in fight,—the brands
Still rusted in their bony hands—
In plague and famine some!
Earth's cities had no sound nor tread;
And ships were drifting with the dead
To shores where all was dumb!

Yet, prophet-like, that lone one stood,
With dauntless words and high,
That shook the sere leaves from the wood
As if a storm pass'd by,
Saying, We are twins in death, proud Sun!
Thy face is cold, thy race is run,
'Tis Mercy bids thee go;
For thou ten thousand thousand years
Hast seen the tide of human tears,
That shall no longer flow.

What though beneath thee man put forth
His pomp, his pride, his skill;
And arts that made fire, flood, and earth,
The vassals of his will?—
Yet mourn I not thy parted sway,
Thou dim discrowned king of day;
For all those trophied arts
And triumphs that beneath thee sprang,
Heal'd not a passion or a pang
Entail'd on human hearts.

Go, let oblivion's curtain fall
Upon the stage of men,
Nor with thy rising beams recall
Life's tragedy again:
Its piteous pageants bring not back,
Nor waken flesh, upon the rack
Of pain anew to writhe;
Stretch'd in disease's shapes abhorr'd,
Or mown in battle by the sword,
Like grass beneath the scythe.

Ev'n I am weary in yon skies
To watch thy fading fire;
Test of all sumless agonies,
Behold not me expire.
My lips that speak thy dirge of death—
Their rounded gasp and gurgling breath
To see thou shalt not boast.
The eclipse of Nature spreads my pall,
The majesty of Darkness shall
Receive my parting ghost!

This spirit shall return to Him
Who gave its heavenly spark;
Yet think not, Sun, it shall be dim
When thou thyself art dark!
No! it shall live again, and shine
In bliss unknown to beams of thine,
By him recall'd to breath,
Who captive led captivity,
Who robb'd the grave of Victory,—
And took the sting from Death!

Go, Sun, while Mercy holds me up
On Nature's awful waste
To drink this last and bitter cup
Of grief that man shall taste—
Go, tell the night that hides thy face,
Thou saw'st the last of Adam's race,
On Earth's sepulchral clod,
The darkening universe defy
To quench his Immortality,
Or shake his trust in God!

ROBERT SOUTHEY (1774–1843)

FOR A COLUMN AT NEWBURY

(*1796*)

Call'st thou thyself a Patriot? On this field
Did Falkland fall, the blameless and the brave,
Beneath the banners of that Charles whom thou
Abhorrest for a Tyrant. Dost thou boast
Of loyalty? The field is not far off,
Where, in rebellious arms against his King,
Hampden was killed,—that Hampden at whose name
The heart of many an honest Englishman
Beats with congenial pride. Both uncorrupt,
Friends to their common country both, they fought,
They died, in adverse armies. Traveller!
If with thy neighbor thou shouldst not accord,
Remember these, our famous countrymen,
And quell all angry and injurious thoughts.

FOR A CAVERN THAT OVERLOOKS THE RIVER AVON

(*1796*)

Enter this cavern, Stranger! Here, awhile
Respiring from the long and steep ascent,
Thou mayst be glad of rest, and haply too
Of shade, if from the summer's westering sun
Sheltered beneath this beetling vault of rock.
Round the rude portal clasping its rough arms,
The antique ivy spreads a canopy,
From whose gray blossoms the wild bees collect
In autumn their last store. The Muses love
This spot; believe a Poet who hath felt
Their visitation here. The tide below,
Rising or refluent, scarcely sends its sound
Of waters up; and from the heights beyond,
Where the high-hanging forest waves and sways,
Varying before the wind its verdant hues,
The voice is music here. Here thou mayst feel
How good, how lovely, Nature! And when, hence
Returning to the city's crowded streets,
Thy sickening eye at every step revolts
From scenes of vice and wretchedness, reflect
That Man creates the evil he endures.

FOR THE CENOTAPH AT ERMENONVILLE

(*1796*)

STRANGER! the MAN of NATURE lies not here:
Enshrined far distant by the Scoffer's[1] side
His relics rest, there by the giddy throng
With blind idolatry alike revered.
Wiselier directed have thy pilgrim feet
Explored the scenes of Ermenonville.
ROUSSEAU
Loved these calm haunts of Solitude and Peace;
Here he has heard the murmurs of the lake,
And the soft rustling of the poplar grove,
When o'er its bending boughs the passing wind
Swept a gray shade. Here, if thy breast be full,
If in thine eye the tear devout should gush,
His SPIRIT shall behold thee, to thine home
From hence returning, purified of heart.

THE INCHCAPE ROCK

(*1802*)

No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,
The ship was still as she could be;
Her sails from heaven received no motion;
Her keel was steady in the ocean.

1 Voltaire.

Without either sign or sound of their shock,
The waves flowed over the Inchcape Rock;
So little they rose, so little they fell,
They did not move the Inchcape Bell.

The Abbot of Aberbrothok
Had placed that Bell on the Inchcape Rock;
On a buoy in the storm it floated and swung,
And over the waves its warning rung.

When the Rock was hid by the surge's swell,
The mariners heard the warning Bell;
And then they knew the perilous Rock,
And blest the Abbot of Aberbrothok.

The Sun in heaven was shining gay;
All things were joyful on that day;
The sea-birds screamed as they wheeled round,
And there was joyance in their sound.

The buoy of the Inchcape Bell was seen,
A darker speck on the ocean green:
Sir Ralph the Rover walked his deck,
And he fixed his eye on the darker speck.

He felt the cheering power of spring;
It made him whistle, it made him sing:
His heart was mirthful to excess,
But the Rover's mirth was wickedness.

His eye was on the Inchcape float;
Quoth he, "My men, put out the boat,
And row me to the Inchcape Rock,
And I'll plague the Abbot of Aberbrothok."

The boat is lowered, the boatmen row,
And to the Inchcape Rock they go;
Sir Ralph bent over from the boat,
And he cut the Bell from the Inchcape float.

Down sunk the Bell with a gurgling sound;
The bubbles rose and burst around:
Quoth Sir Ralph, "The next who comes to the Rock
Won't bless the Abbot of Aberbrothok."

Sir Ralph the Rover sailed away;
He scoured the seas for many a day;
And now, grown rich with plundered store,
He steers his course for Scotland's shore.

So thick a haze o'erspreads the sky,
They cannot see the Sun on high:
The wind hath blown a gale all day;
At evening it hath died away.

On the deck the Rover takes his stand;
So dark it is, they see no land.
Quoth Sir Ralph, "It will be lighter soon,
For there is the dawn of the rising Moon."

"Canst hear," said one, "the breakers roar?
For methinks we should be near the shore."
"Now where we are I cannot tell,
But I wish I could hear the Inchcape Bell."

They hear no sound; the swell is strong;
Though the wind hath fallen, they drift along,
Till the vessel strikes with a shivering shock:
"O Christ! it is the Inchcape Rock!"

Sir Ralph the Rover tore his hair,
He curst himself in his despair:
The waves rush in on every side;
The ship is sinking beneath the tide.

But, even in his dying fear,
One dreadful sound could the Rover hear,—
A sound as if, with the Inchcape Bell,
The Devil below was ringing his knell.

THE WELL OF ST. KEYNE

(*1798*)

A Well there is in the west country,
And a clearer one never was seen;
There is not a wife in the west country
But has heard of the Well of St. Keyne.

An oak and an elm tree stand beside,
And behind doth an ash-tree grow,
And a willow from the bank above
Droops to the water below.

A traveller came to the Well of St. Keyne;
Joyfully he drew nigh;
For from cock-crow he had been travelling,
And there was not a cloud in the sky.

He drank of the water so cool and clear,
For thirsty and hot was he;
And he sat down upon the bank,
Under the willow-tree.

There came a man from the house hard by,
At the Well to fill his pail;
On the Well-side he rested it,
And he bade the Stranger hail.

"Now, art thou a bachelor, Stranger?" quoth he;
"For, an if thou hast a wife,
The happiest draught thou hast drank this day
That ever thou didst in thy life.

"Or has thy good woman, if one thou hast,
Ever here in Cornwall been?
For, an if she have, I'll venture my life
She has drank of the Well of St. Keyne."

"I have left a good woman who never was here,"
The Stranger he made reply;
"But that my draught should be the better for that,
I pray you answer me why."

"St. Keyne," quoth the Cornish-man, "many a time
Drank of this crystal Well;
And, before the angel summoned her,
She laid on the water a spell,—

"If the Husband, of this gifted Well
Shall drink before his Wife,
A happy man thenceforth is he,
For he shall be Master for life;—

"But, if the Wife should drink of it first,
God help the Husband then!"—
The Stranger stooped to the Well of St. Keyne,
And drank of the water again.

"You drank of the Well, I warrant, betimes?"
He to the Cornish-man said;
But the Cornish-man smiled as the Stranger spake,
And sheepishly shook his head:—

"I hastened, as soon as the wedding was done,
And left my Wife in the porch;
But i' faith she had been wiser than me,
For she took a bottle to church."

BISHOP BRUNO

(1798)

Bishop Bruno awoke in the dead midnight,
And he heard his heart beat loud with affright:
He dreamt he had rung the palace-bell,
And the sound it gave was his passing knell.

Bishop Bruno smiled at his fears so vain;
He turned to sleep, and he dreamt again;
He rang at the palace-gate once more,
And Death was the Porter that opened the door.

He started up at the fearful dream,
And he heard at his window the screech-owl scream:
Bishop Bruno slept no more that night;
Oh, glad was he when he saw the daylight!

Now he goes forth in proud array,
For he with the Emperor dines to-day:
There was not a Baron in Germany
That went with a nobler train than he.

Before and behind his soldiers ride:
The people thronged to see their pride;
They bowed the head, and the knee they bent,
But nobody blest him as he went.

So he went on stately and proud,
When he heard a voice that cried aloud,
"Ho, ho, Bishop Bruno! you travel with glee;
But, I would have you know, you travel to me!"

Behind and before, and on either side,
He looked, but nobody he espied;
And the Bishop at that grew cold with fear,
For he heard the words distinct and clear.

And, when he rang at the palace-bell,
He almost expected to hear his knell;
And, when the Porter turned the key,
He almost expected Death to see.

But soon the Bishop recovered his glee,
For the Emperor welcomed him royally;
And now the tables were spread, and there
Were choicest wines and dainty fare.

And now the Bishop had blest the meat,
When a voice was heard as he sat in his seat:
"With the Emperor now you are dining with glee;
But know, Bishop Bruno, you sup with me!"

The Bishop then grew pale with affright,
And suddenly lost his appetite:

All the wine and dainty cheer
Could not comfort his heart, that was sick with fear.

But by little and little recovered he,
For the wine went flowing merrily,
Till at length he forgot his former dread,
And his cheeks again grew rosy red.

When he sat down to the royal fare,
Bishop Bruno was the saddest man there;
But, when the maskers entered the hall,
He was the merriest man of all.

Then from amid the maskers' crowd
There went a voice hollow and loud:
"You have passed the day, Bishop Bruno, in glee;
But you must pass the night with me!"

His cheek grows pale, and his eyeballs glare,
And stiff round his tonsure bristled his hair:
With that there came one from the maskers' band,
And took the Bishop by the hand.

The bony hand suspended his breath,
His marrow grew cold at the touch of Death;
On saints in vain he attempted to call,
Bishop Bruno fell dead in the palace-hall.

THE BATTLE OF BLENHEIM

(1798)

1

It was a summer evening;
Old Kaspar's work was done,
And he before his cottage-door
Was sitting in the sun;
And by him sported on the green
His little grandchild Wilhelmine.

2

She saw her brother Peterkin
Roll something large and round,
Which he beside the rivulet,
In playing there, had found:
He came to ask what he had found,
That was so large and smooth and round.

3

Old Kaspar took it from the boy,
Who stood expectant by;
And then the old man shook his head,
And with a natural sigh,
"'Tis some poor fellow's skull," said he,
"Who fell in the great victory.

4

"I find them in the garden,
For there's many here about;
And often, when I go to plough,
The ploughshare turns them out;
For many thousand men," said he,
"Were slain in that great victory."

5

"Now tell us what 'twas all about,"
Young Peterkin he cries;
And little Wilhelmine looks up
With wonder-waiting eyes;
"Now tell us all about the war,
And what they fought each other for."

6

"It was the English," Kaspar cried,
"Who put the French to rout;
But what they fought each other for,
I could not well make out;
But everybody said," quoth he,
"That 'twas a famous victory.

7

"My father lived at Blenheim then,
Yon little stream hard by;
They burnt his dwelling to the ground,
And he was forced to fly;
So with his wife and child he fled,
Nor had he where to rest his head.

8

"With fire and sword the country round
Was wasted far and wide,
And many a childing mother then,
And new-born baby, died;
But things like that, you know, must be
At every famous victory.

9

"They say it was a shocking sight
After the field was won;
For many thousand bodies here
Lay rotting in the sun:

But things like that, you know, must be
After a famous victory.

10

"Great praise the Duke of Marlborough won,
And our good Prince Eugene."
"Why, 'twas a very wicked thing!"
Said little Wilhelmine.
"Nay, nay, my little girl," quoth he;
"It was a famous victory.

11

"And everybody praised the Duke,
Who this great fight did win."
"But what good came of it at last?"
Quoth little Peterkin.
"Why, that I cannot tell," said he;
"But 'twas a famous victory."

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON A WICKED BISHOP

(*1799*)

The summer and autumn had been so wet,
That in winter the corn was growing yet:
'Twas a piteous sight to see, all around,
The grain lie rotting on the ground.

Every day the starving poor
Crowded around Bishop Hatto's door;
For he had a plentiful last year's store,
And all the neighborhood could tell
His granaries were furnished well.

At last Bishop Hatto appointed a day
To quiet the poor without delay:
He bade them to his great barn repair,
And they should have food for the winter there.

Rejoiced such tidings good to hear,
The poor folk flocked from far and near;
The great barn was full as it could hold
Of women and children, and young and old.

Then, when he saw it could hold no more,
Bishop Hatto he made fast the door;
And, while for mercy on Christ they call,
He set fire to the barn, and burnt them all.

"I' faith, 'tis an excellent bonfire!" quoth he;
"And the country is greatly obliged to me
For ridding it in these times forlorn
Of Rats that only consume the corn."

So then to his palace returnèd he,
And he sat down to supper merrily,
And he slept that night like an innocent man;
But Bishop Hatto never slept again.

In the morning, as he entered the hall
Where his picture hung against the wall,
A sweat like death all over him came;
For the Rats had eaten it out of the frame.

As he looked, there came a man from his farm;
He had a countenance white with alarm;
"My Lord, I opened your granaries this morn,
And the Rats had eaten all your corn."

Another came running presently,
And he was pale as pale could be:
"Fly, my Lord Bishop, fly!" quoth he,
"Ten thousand Rats are coming this way:
The Lord forgive you for yesterday!"

"I'll go to my tower on the Rhine," replied he;
"'Tis the safest place in Germany;
The walls are high, and the shores are steep,
And the stream is strong, and the water deep."

Bishop Hatto fearfully hastened away,
And he crossed the Rhine without delay,
And reached his tower, and barred with care
All windows, doors, and loop-holes there.

He laid him down, and closed his eyes;
But soon a scream made him arise:
He started, and saw two eyes of flame
On his pillow, from whence the screaming came.

He listened and looked; it was only the Cat;
But the Bishop he grew more fearful for that;
For she sat screaming, mad with fear
At the Army of Rats that were drawing near.

For they have swam over the river so deep,
And they have climbed the shores so steep;
And up the tower their way is bent,
To do the work for which they were sent.

They are not to be told by the dozen or score;
By thousands they come, and by myriads and more:
Such numbers had never been heard of before,
Such a judgment had never been witnessed of yore.

Down on his knees the Bishop fell,
And faster and faster his beads did tell,
As, louder and louder drawing near,
The gnawing of their teeth he could hear.

And in at the windows, and in at the door,
And through the walls, helter-skelter they pour,
And down from the ceiling, and up through the floor,
From the right and the left, from behind and before,
From within and without, from above and below,
And all at once to the Bishop they go.

They have whetted their teeth against the stones;
And now they pick the Bishop's bones:
They gnawed the flesh from every limb;
For they were sent to do judgment on him!

From *THALABA (BOOK I)*:

(1801)

THE PALACE OF KING SHEDAD[1]

(*Condensed*)

She cast her eyes around:
Alas! no tents were there
Beside the bending sands;
No palm-tree rose to spot the wilderness;
The dark-blue sky closed round,
And rested like a dome
Upon the circling waste.
She cast her eyes around:
Famine and Thirst were there;
And then the wretched mother bowed her head,
And wept upon her child.

A sudden cry of wonder
From Thalaba aroused her;
She raised her head, and saw
Where, high in air, a stately palace rose.
Amid a grove embowered
Stood the prodigious pile;
Trees of such ancient majesty
Towered not on Yemen's happy hills,
Nor crowned the lofty brow of Lebanon;
Fabric so vast, so lavishly enriched,
For Idol or for Tyrant, never yet
Raised the slave race of man,
In Rome, nor in the elder Babylon,
Nor old Persepolis,
Nor where the family of Greece
Hymned Eleutherian Jove.

Here, studding azure tablatures
And rayed with feeble light,
Star-like the ruby and the diamond shone;
Here on the golden towers
The yellow moonbeam lay;
Here with white splendor floods the silver wall.
Less wondrous pile, and less magnificent,
Sennamar built at Hirah, though his art
Sealed with one stone the ample edifice,
And made its colors, like the serpent's skin,
Play with a changeful beauty: him its lord,
Jealous lest after-effort might surpass
The then unequalled palace, from its height
Dashed on the pavement down.

They entered, and through aromatic paths
Wondering they went along.
At length, upon a mossy bank,
Beneath a tall minosa's shade,
Which o'er him bent its living canopy,
They saw a man reclined.
Young he appeared; for on his cheek there shone
The morning glow of health,
And the brown beard curled close around his chin.

. . . . . .

To Zeinab turning then, he said,
"O mortal! who art thou,
Whose gifted eyes have pierced
The shadow of concealment that hath wrapt
These bowers, so many an age,
From eye of mortal man?
For countless years have passed,
And never foot of man
The bowers of Irem trod,—

[1] Another poetical version of this Mohammedan legend can be found in Edwin Arnold's "Pearls of the Faith."

Save only I, a miserable wretch
From Heaven and Earth shut out!"

. . . . . .

She answered, "Yesterday
I was a wife beloved,
The fruitful mother of a numerous race:
I am a widow now;
Of all my offspring this alone is left.
Then said the stranger, "Not by Heaven unseen,
Nor in unguided wanderings, hast thou reached
This secret place, be sure!
The Paradise of Irem this;
And this that wonder of the world,
The Palace built by Shedad in his pride.
My name was Aswad then,—
Alas, alas, how strange
The sound so long unheard!
Of noble race I came,
One of the wealthy of the earth my sire.

. . . . . .

"A mighty work the pride of Shedad planned,—
Here in the wilderness to form
A Garden more surpassing fair
Than that before whose gate
The lightning of the Cherub's fiery sword
Waves wide to bar access,
Since Adam, the transgressor, thence was driven.
Here, too, would Shedad build
A kingly pile sublime,
The Palace of his pride.

"For this, exhausted mines
Supplied their golden store;
For this the central caverns gave their gems;
For this the woodman's axe
Opened the cedar forest to the sun;
The silkworm of the East
Spun her sepulchral egg;
The hunter Afri
Provoked the danger of the Elephant's rage;
The Ethiop, keen of scent,
Detects the ebony,
That, deep-inearthed, and hating light,
A leafless tree and barren of all fruit,
With darkness feeds its boughs of raven grain.
Such were the treasures lavished in yon pile:
Ages have passed away,
And never mortal eye
Gazed on their vanity.

"The Garden,—copious springs
Blest that delightful spot;
And every flower was planted there
That makes the gale of evening sweet.
He spake, and bade the full-grown forest rise,
His own creation: should the King
Wait for slow Nature's work?
All trees that bend with luscious fruit,
Or wave with feathery boughs,
Or point their spiring heads to heaven,
Or, spreading wide their shadowy arms,
Invite the traveller to repose at noon,—
Hither, uprooted with their native soil,
The labor and the pain of multitudes,—
Mature in beauty, bore them.
Here, frequent in the walks,
The marble statue stood
Of heroes and of chiefs.
The trees and flowers remain,
By Nature's care perpetuate and self-sown.
The marble statues long have lost all trace
Of heroes and of chiefs;
Huge, shapeless stones they lie,
O'ergrown with many a flower.

"The work of pride went on;
Often the Prophet's voice
Denounced impending woe;
We mocked at the words of the Seer,
We mocked at the wrath of the Lord.
A long-continued drought first troubled us;
Three years no cloud had formed,
Three years no rain had fallen;
The wholesome herb was dry,
The corn matured not for the food of man,
The wells and fountains failed.

. . . . . .

"Then to the Place of Concourse messengers
Were sent, to Mecca, where the nations came,
Round the Red Hillock kneeling, to implore
God in his favored place.

. . . . . .

"The day of Visitation was at hand;
The fearful hour of Judgment hastened on.
Lo! Shedad's mighty pile complete,
The Palace of his pride.

Would ye behold its wonders, enter in!
I have no heart to visit it.
Time hath not harmed the eternal monument;
Time is not here, nor days nor months nor years,
An everlasting NOW of solitude!

"Ye must have heard their fame,
Or likely ye have seen
The mighty Pyramids;
For sure those awful piles have overlived
The feeble generations of mankind.
What though unmoved they bore the deluge weight,
Survivors of the ruined world?
What though their founder filled with miracles
And wealth miraculous their spacious vaults?
Compared with yonder fabric, and they shrink
The baby wonders of a woman's work.

"Here emerald columns o'er the marble courts
Shed their green rays, as when amid a shower
The sun shines loveliest on the vernal corn.
Here Shedad bade the sapphire floor be laid,
As though with feet divine
To tread on azure light,
Like the blue pavement of the firmament.
Here, self-suspended, hangs in air,
As its pure substance loathed material touch,
The living carbuncle;
Sun of the lofty dome,
Darkness hath no dominion o'er its beams;
Intense it glows, an ever-flowing spring
Of radiance, like the day-flood in its source.

"Impious! the Trees of vegetable gold,
Such as in Eden's groves
Yet innocent it grew;
Impious! he made his boast, though Heaven had hid
So deep the baneful ore,
That they should branch and bud for him,
That art should force their blossoms and their fruit,
And re-create for him whate'er
Was lost in Paradise.
Therefore at Shedad's voice
Here towered the palm, a silver trunk,
The fine gold network growing out
Loose from its rugged boughs.
Tall as the cedar of the mountain, here
Rose the gold branches, hung with emerald leaves,
Blossomed with pearls, and rich with ruby fruit.

"O Ad, my country! evil was the day
That thy unhappy sons
Crouched at this Nimrod's throne,
And placed him on the pedestal of power,
And laid their liberties beneath his feet,
Robbing their children of the heritance
Their fathers handed down.
What was to him the squandered wealth?
What was to him the burden of the land,
The lavished misery?
He did but speak his will,
And, like the blasting Siroc of the sands,
The ruin of the royal voice
Found its way everywhere.
I marvel not that he, whose power
No earthly law, no human feeling, curbed,
Mocked at the living God!

"And now the King's command went forth
Among the people, bidding old and young,
Husband and wife, the master and the slave,
All the collected multitudes of Ad,
Here to repair, and hold high festival,
That he might see his people, they behold
Their King's magnificence and power.
The day of festival arrived:
Hither they came, the old man and the boy,
Husband and wife, the master and the slave,—
Hither they came. From yonder high tower-top,

The loftiest of the Palace, Shedad looked
Down on his tribe: their tents on yonder sands
Rose like the countless billows of the sea;
Their tread and voices like the ocean roar,—
One deep confusion of tumultuous sounds.
They saw their King's magnificence, beheld
His palace sparkling like the Angel domes
Of Paradise, his Garden like the bowers
Of early Eden; and they shouted out,
'Great is the King! a God upon the Earth!'

. . . . . .

"Sudden an uproar rose,
A cry of joy below:
'The messenger is come!
Kail from Mecca comes;
He brings the boon obtained!'

"Forth as we went, we saw where overhead
There hung a deep-black cloud,
To which the multitude
With joyful eyes looked up,
And blest the coming rain.
The Messenger addressed the King,
And told his tale of joy.

"'To Mecca I repaired,
By the Red Hillock knelt,
And called on God for rain.
My prayer ascended, and was heard:
Three clouds appeared in Heaven,—
One white, and like the flying cloud of noon;
One red, as it had drunk the evening beams;
One black, and heavy with its load of rain.
A voice went forth from Heaven,—
"Choose, Kail, of the three!"
I thanked the gracious Power,
And chose the black cloud, heavy with its wealth.'
'Right! right!' a thousand tongues exclaimed;
And all was merriment and joy.

"Then stood the Prophet up, and cried aloud,
'Woe, woe to Irem! woe to Ad!
DEATH is gone up into her palaces!
Woe! woe! a day of guilt and punishment,
A day of desolation!'—As he spake,
His large eye rolled in horror, and so deep
His tone, it seemed some Spirit from within
Breathed through his moveless lips the unearthly voice.

"All looks were turned to him. 'O Ad,' he cried,
'Dear native land, by all remembrances
Of childhood, by all joys of manhood dear,—
O Vale of many Waters! morn and night
My age must groan for you, and to the grave
Go down in sorrow. Thou wilt give thy fruits,
But who shall gather them? thy grapes will ripen,
But who shall tread the wine-press? Fly the wrath,
Ye who would live and save your souls alive!
For strong is his right hand that bends the Bow;
The Arrows that he shoots are sharp.
And err not from their aim!'

"With that a faithful few
Pressed through the throng to join him. Then arose
Mockery and mirth: 'Go, bald head!' and they mixed
Curses with laughter. He set forth, yet once
Looked back: his eye fell on me, and he called,
'Aswad!'—it startled me, it terrified.
'Aswad!' again he called; and I almost
Had followed him. Oh moment fled too soon!
Oh moment irrecoverably lost!
The shouts of mockery made a coward of me;
He went, and I remained in fear of MAN!

"He went, and darker grew
The deepening cloud above,

At length it opened, and—O God! O God!—
There were no waters there!
There fell no kindly rain!
The Sarsar from its womb went forth,—
The Icy Wind of Death.

"They fell around me; thousands fell around;
The King and all his people fell;
All, all,—they perished all!
I—only I—was left.
There came a Voice to me, and said,
'In the day of Visitation,
In the fearful hour of Judgment,
God hath remembered thee.'

"When from an agony of prayer I rose,
And from the scene of death
Attempted to go forth,
The way was open; I could see
No barrier to my steps.
But round these bowers the arm of God
Had drawn a mighty chain,
A barrier that no human force might break.
Twice I essayed to pass;
With that a Voice was heard,—
'O Aswad, be content, and bless the Lord!
One charitable deed hath saved
Thy soul from utter death.
O Aswad, sinful man!
When by long penitence
Thou feel'st thy soul prepared,
Breathe up the wish to die,
And Azrael comes in answer to thy prayer.'

"A miserable man,
From Earth and Heaven shut out,
I heard the dreadful Voice,
I looked around my prison-place:
The bodies of the dead were there;
Where'er I looked, they lay;
They mouldered, mouldered here:
Their very bones have crumbled into dust,
So many years have passed,
So many weary ages have gone by!
And still I linger here,
Still groaning with the burden of my sins,
Nor yet have dared to breathe
The prayer to be released.

"Oh! who can tell the unspeakable misery
Of solitude like this?
No sound hath ever reached my ear
Save of the passing wind,
The fountain's everlasting flow,
The forest in the gale,
The pattering of the shower,—
Sounds dead and mournful all.
No bird hath ever closed her wing
Upon these solitary bowers,
No insect sweetly buzzed amid these groves,
From all things that have life,
Save only me, concealed.
This Tree alone, that o'er my head
Hangs down its hospitable boughs,
And bends its whispering leaves
As though to welcome me,
Seems to partake of life:
I love it as my friend, my only friend!

"I know not for what ages I have dragged
This miserable life;
How often I have seen
These ancient trees renewed;
What countless generations of mankind
Have risen and fallen asleep,
And I remained the same!
My garment hath not waxen old,
And the sole of my shoe is not worn."

"MY DAYS AMONG THE DEAD ARE PASSED"

(*1818*)

1

My days among the Dead are passed;
Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old;
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

2

With them I take delight in weal,
And seek relief in woe;
And, while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedewed
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

3

My thoughts are with the Dead; with them
I live in long-past years,

Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and fears,
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

4

My hopes are with the Dead; anon
My place with them will be,
And I with them shall travel on
Through all futurity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.

THE CATARACT OF LODORE

DESCRIBED IN RHYMES FOR THE NURSERY

(*1820*)

"How does the Water
Come down at Lodore?"
My little boy asked me
Thus once on a time;
And moreover he tasked me
To tell him in rhyme.
Anon, at the word,
There first came one daughter,
And then came another,
To second and third
The request of their brother,
And to hear how the Water
Comes down at Lodore,
With its rush and its roar,
As many a time
They had seen it before.
So I told them in rhyme,
For of rhymes I had store;
And 'twas in my vocation
For their recreation
That so I should sing,
Because I was Laureate
To them and the King.

From its sources which well
In the Tarn on the fell;
From its fountains
In the mountains,
Its rills and its gills,—
Through moss and through brake
It runs and it creeps
For awhile, till it sleeps
In its own little Lake.
And thence at departing,
Awakening and starting,
It runs through the reeds,
And away it proceeds
Through meadow and glade,
In sun and in shade,
And through the wood-shelter,
Among crags in its flurry,
Helter-skelter,
Hurry-skurry.
Here it comes sparkling,
And there it lies darkling;
Now smoking and frothing
Its tumult and wrath in,
Till, in this rapid race
On which it is bent,
It reaches the place
Of its steep descent.

The Cataract strong
Then plunges along,
Striking and raging,
As if a war waging
Its caverns and rocks among;
Rising and leaping,
Sinking and creeping,
Swelling and sweeping,
Showering and springing,
Flying and flinging,
Writhing and ringing,
Eddying and whisking,
Spouting and frisking,
Turning and twisting,
Around and around
With endless rebound!
Smiting and fighting,
A sight to delight in;
Confounding, astounding,
Dizzying and deafening the ear with its sound.

Collecting, projecting,
Receding and speeding,
And shocking and rocking,
And darting and parting,
And threading and spreading,
And whizzing and hissing,
And dripping and skipping,
And hitting and splitting,
And shining and twining,
And rattling and battling,
And shaking and quaking,
And pouring and roaring,
And waving and raving,
And tossing and crossing,
And flowing and going,
And running and stunning,
And foaming and roaming,
And dinning and spinning,
And dropping and hopping,
And working and jerking,
And guggling and struggling,
And heaving and cleaving,
And moaning and groaning;

And glittering and frittering,
And gathering and feathering,
And whitening and brightening,
And quivering and shivering,
And hurrying and skurrying,
And thundering and floundering;

Dividing and gliding and sliding,
And falling and brawling and sprawling,
And driving and riving and striving,
And sprinkling and twinkling and wrinkling,
And sounding and bounding and rounding,
And bubbling and troubling and doubling,
And grumbling and rumbling and tumbling,
And clattering and battering and shattering,

Retreating and beating and meeting and sheeting,
Delaying and straying and playing and spraying,
Advancing and prancing and glancing and dancing,
Recoiling, turmoiling and toiling and boiling,
And gleaming and streaming and steaming and beaming,
And rushing and flushing and brushing and gushing,
And flapping and rapping and clapping and slapping,
And curling and whirling and purling and twirling,
And thumping and plumping and bumping and jumping,
And dashing and flashing and splashing and clashing;
And so never ending, but always descending,
Sounds and motions for ever and ever are blending,
All at once and all o'er, with a mighty uproar;
And this way the Water comes down at Lodore.

GEORGE CRABBE (1754–1832)

From "THE PARISH REGISTER—BURIALS"

(1807)

Andrew Collett

Such have I seen in death, and much deplore,
So many dying—that I see no more:
Lo! now my records, where I grieve to trace,
How Death has triumph'd in so short a space;
Who are the dead, how died they, I relate,
And snatch some portion of their acts from fate.
With Andrew Collett we the year begin,
The blind, fat landlord of the Old Crown Inn,—
Big as his butt, and, for the self-same use,
To take in stores of strong fermenting juice.
On his huge chair beside the fire he sate,
In revel chief, and umpire in debate;
Each night his string of vulgar tales he told;
When ale was cheap and bachelors were bold:
His heroes all were famous in their days,
Cheats were his boast and drunkards had his praise;
"One, in three draughts, three mugs of ale took down,
As mugs were then—the champion of the Crown;
For thrice three days another lived on ale,
And knew no change but that of mild and stale;
Two thirsty soakers watch'd a vessel's side,
When he the tap, with dexterous hand, applied;
Nor from their seats departed, till they found
That butt was out and heard the mournful sound."
He praised a poacher, precious child of fun!
Who shot the keeper with his own spring-gun;
Nor less the smuggler who the exciseman tied,
And left him hanging at the birch-wood side,

There to expire;—but one who saw him hang
Cut the good cord—a traitor of the gang.
His own exploits with boastful glee he told,
What ponds he emptied and what pikes he sold;
And how, when bless'd with sight alert and gay,
The night's amusements kept him through the day.
He sang the praises of those times, when all
"For cards and dice, as for their drink, might call;
When justice wink'd on every jovial crew,
And ten-pins tumbled in the parson's view."
He told, when angry wives, provoked to rail,
Or drive a third-day drunkard from his ale,
What were his triumphs, and how great the skill
That won the vex'd virago to his will;
Who raving came;—then talk'd in milder strain,—
Then wept, then drank, and pledged her spouse again.
Such were his themes: how knaves o'er laws prevail,
Or, when made captives, how they fly from jail;
The young how brave, how subtle were the old:
And oaths attested all that Folly told.
On death like his what name shall we bestow,
So very sudden! yet so very slow?
'T was slow:—Disease, augmenting year by year,
Show'd the grim king by gradual steps brought near:
'Twas not less sudden; in the night he died,
He drank, he swore, he jested, and he lied;
Thus aiding folly with departing breath:—
'Beware, Lorenzo, the slow-sudden death.' "

Widow Goe

Next died the Widow Goe, an active dame,
Famed ten miles round, and worthy all her fame;
She lost her husband when their loves were young,
But kept her farm, her credit, and her tongue:
Full thirty years she ruled, with matchless skill,
With guiding judgment and resistless will;
Advice she scorn'd, rebellions she suppress'd,
And sons and servants bow'd at her behest.
Like that great man's who to his Saviour came,
Were the strong words of this commanding dame:—
"Come," if she said, they came; if "go," were gone;
And if "do this"—that instant it was done:
Her maidens told she was all eye and ear,
In darkness saw and could at distance hear;—
No parish-business in the place could stir,
Without direction or assent from her;
In turn she took each office as it fell,
Knew all their duties, and discharged them well;
The lazy vagrants in her presence shook,
And pregnant damsels fear'd her stern rebuke;
She look'd on want with judgment clear and cool,
And felt with reason and bestow'd by rule;
She match'd both sons and daughters to her mind,
And lent them eyes, for Love, she heard, was blind;
Yet ceaseless still she throve, alert, alive,
The working bee, in full or empty hive;
Busy and careful, like that working bee,
No time for love nor tender cares had she;
But when our farmers made their amorous vows,
She talk'd of market-steeds and patent-ploughs.
Not unemploy'd her evenings pass'd away,
Amusement closed, as business waked the day;
When to her toilet's brief concern she ran,
And conversation with her friends began,
Who all were welcome, what they saw, to share;
And joyous neighbors praised her Christmas fare,
That none around might, in their scorn, complain
Of Gossip Goe as greedy in her gain.
Thus long she reign'd, admired, if not approved;
Praised, if not honor'd, fear'd if not beloved;—

When, as the busy days of Spring drew near,
That call'd for all the forecast of the year;
When lively hope the rising crops survey'd,
And April promised what September paid;
When stray'd her lambs where gorse and greenweed grow;
When rose her grass in richer vales below;
When pleased she look'd on all the smiling land,
And viewed the hinds, who wrought at her command;
(Poultry in groups still follow'd where she went;)
Then dread o'ercame her,—that her days were spent.
"Bless me! I die, and not a warning giv'n,—
With *much* to do on Earth, and ALL for Heav'n!—
No reparation for my soul's affairs,
No leave petition'd for the barn's repairs;
Accounts perplex'd, my interest yet unpaid,
My mind unsettled, and my will unmade;—
A lawyer haste, and in your way, a priest;
And let me die in one good work at least."
She spake, and, trembling, dropp'd upon her knees,
Heaven in her eye and in her hand her keys;
And still the more she found her life decay,
With greater force she grasp'd those signs of sway:
Then fell and died!—In haste her sons drew near,
And dropp'd, in haste, the tributary tear,
Then from th' adhering clasp the keys unbound,
And consolation for their sorrow found.

CATHERINE LLOYD

Down by the church-way walk and where the brook
Winds round the chancel like a shepherd's crook;
In that small house, with those green pales before,
Where jasmine trails on either side the door;
Where those dark shrubs that now grow wild at will,
Were clipp'd in form and tantalized with skill;
Where cockles blanch'd and pebbles neatly spread,
Form'd shining borders for the larkspurs' bed;—
There lived a Lady, wise, austere, and nice,
Who show'd her virtue by her scorn of vice;
In the dear fashions of her youth she dress'd,
A pea-green Joseph was her favorite vest;
Erect she stood, she walk'd with stately mien,
Tight was her length of stays, and she was tall and lean.
There long she lived in maiden-state immured,
From looks of love and treacherous man secured;
Though evil fame—(but that was long before)
Had blown her dubious blast at Catherine's door:
A Captain thither, rich from India came,
And though a cousin call'd, it touch'd her fame:
Her annual stipend rose from his behest,
And all the long-prized treasures she possess'd:—
If aught like joy awhile appear'd to stay
In that stern face, and chase those frowns away,
'Twas when her treasures she disposed, for view,
And heard the praises to their splendor due;
Silks beyond price, so rich, they'd stand alone,
And diamonds blazing on the buckled zone;
Rows of rare pearls by curious workmen set,
And bracelets fair in box of glossy jet;
Bright polish'd amber precious from its size,
Of forms the fairest fancy could devise:
Her drawers of cedar, shut with secret springs,
Conceal'd the watch of gold and rubied rings;
Letters, long proofs of love, and verses fine
Round the pink'd rims of crispèd Valentine.
Her china-closet, cause of daily care,
For woman's wonder held her pencill'd ware;
That pictured wealth of China and Japan,
Like its cold mistress, shunn'd the eye of man.
Her neat small room, adorn'd with maiden-taste,

A clipp'd French puppy, first of favorites, graced:
A parrot next, but dead and stuff'd with art;
(For Poll, when living, lost the Lady's heart,
And then his life; for he was heard to speak
Such frightful words as tinged his Lady's cheek:)
Unhappy bird! who had no power to prove,
Save by such speech, his gratitude and love.
A grey old cat his whiskers lick'd beside;
A type of sadness in the house of pride.
The polish'd surface of an India chest,
A glassy globe, in frame of ivory, press'd;
Where swam two finny creatures; one of gold,
Of silver one; both beauteous to behold:—
All these were form'd the guiding taste to suit;
The beasts well-manner'd and the fishes mute.
A widow'd Aunt was there, compell'd by need
The nymph to flatter and her tribe to feed;
Who, veiling well her scorn, endured the clog,
Mute as the fish and fawning as the dog.
As years increased, these treasures, her delight,
Arose in value in their owner's sight:
A miser knows that, view it as he will,
A guinea kept is but a guinea still;
And so he puts it to its proper use,
That something more this guinea may produce:
But silks and rings, in the possessor's eyes,
The oft'ner seen, the more in value rise,
And thus are wisely hoarded to bestow
The kind of pleasure that with years will grow.
But what avail'd their worth—if worth had they,—
In the sad summer of her slow decay?
Then we beheld her turn an anxious look
From trunks and chests, and fix it on her book,—
A rich-bound Book of Prayer the Captain gave,
(Some Princess had it, or was said to have;)
And then once more, on all her stores, look round,
And draw a sigh so piteous and profound,
That told, "Alas! how hard from these to part,
And for new hopes and habits form the heart!
What shall I do (she cried), my peace of mind
To gain in dying, and to die resign'd?"
"Hear," we return'd;—"these baubles cast aside,
Nor give thy God a rival in thy pride
Thy closets shut, and ope thy kitchen's door;
There own thy failings, *here* invite the poor;
A friend of Mammon let thy bounty make;
For widow's prayers, thy vanities forsake;
And let the hungry, of thy pride, partake:
Then shall thy inward eye with joy survey
The angel Mercy tempering Death's delay!"
Alas! 'twas hard; the treasures still had charms,
Hope still its flattery, sickness its alarms;
Still was the same unsettled, clouded view,
And the same plaintive cry, "What shall I do?"
Nor change appear'd: for when her race was run,
Doubtful we all exclaim'd, "What has been done?"
Apart she lived, and still she lies alone;
Yon earthly heap awaits the flattering stone,
On which invention shall be long employ'd,
To show the various worth of Catherine Lloyd.

Isaac Ashford

Next to these ladies, but in nought allied,
A noble Peasant, Isaac Ashford, died.
Noble he was, contemning all things mean,
His truth unquestion'd and his soul serene:
Of no man's presence Isaac felt afraid;
At no man's question Isaac look'd dismay'd:
Shame knew him not, he dreaded no disgrace:
Truth, simple truth, was written in his face;
Yet while the serious thought his soul approved,
Cheerful he seem'd, and gentleness he loved:
To bliss domestic he his heart resign'd,
And, with the firmest, had the fondest mind:

Were others joyful, he look'd smiling on,
And gave allowance where he needed none;
Good he refused with future ill to buy,
Nor knew a joy that caused reflection's sigh;
A friend to virtue, his unclouded breast
No envy stung, no jealousy distress'd;
(Bane of the poor! it wounds their weaker mind,
To miss one favor which their neighbors find):
Yet far was he from stoic pride removed;
He felt humanely, and he warmly loved:
I mark'd his action, when his infant died,
And his old neighbor for offence was tried;
The still tears, stealing down that furrow'd cheek,
Spoke pity, plainer than the tongue can speak.
If pride were his, 'twas not their vulgar pride,
Who, in their base contempt, the great deride;
Nor pride in learning,—though my clerk agreed,
If fate should call him, Ashford might succeed;
Nor pride in rustic skill, although we knew
None his superior, and his equals few:—
But if that spirit in his soul had place,
It was the jealous pride that shuns disgrace;
A pride in honest fame, by virtue gain'd,
In sturdy boys to virtuous labors train'd;
Pride, in the power that guards his country's coast,
And all that Englishmen enjoy and boast;
Pride, in a life that slander's tongue defied,—
In fact, a noble passion, misnamed pride.
He had no party's rage, no sect'ry's whim;
Christian and countryman was all with him:
True to his church he came; no Sunday-shower
Kept him at home in that important hour;
Nor his firm feet could one persuading sect,
By the strong glare of their new light, direct;—
"On hope, in mine own sober light, I gaze,
But should be blind and lose it, in your blaze."
In times severe, when many a sturdy swain
Felt it his pride, his comfort, to complain,
Isaac their wants would soothe, his own would hide,
And feel in that his comfort and his pride.
At length he found, when seventy years were run,
His strength departed, and his labor done;
When he, save honest fame, retain'd no more,
But lost his wife and saw his children poor:
'Twas then, a spark of—say not discontent—
Struck on his mind, and thus he gave it vent:
"Kind are your laws, ('tis not to be denied),
That in yon house, for ruin'd age, provide,
And they are just;—when young, we give you all,
And for assistance in our weakness call.—
Why then this proud reluctance to be fed,
To join your poor, and eat the parish-bread?
But yet I linger, loth with him to feed,
Who gains his plenty by the sons of need;
He who, by contract, all your paupers took,
And gauges stomachs with an anxious look:
On some old master I could well depend;
See him with joy and thank him as a friend;
But ill on him, who doles the day's supply,
And counts our chances, who at night may die:
Yet help me, Heav'n! and let me not complain
Of what I suffer, but my fate sustain."
Such were his thoughts, and so resign'd he grew;
Daily he placed the workhouse in his view!
But came not there, for sudden was his fate,
He dropp'd, expiring, at his cottage-gate.
I feel his absence in the hours of prayer,
And view his seat and sigh for Isaac there:
I see no more those white locks thinly spread
Round the bald polish of that honor'd head;
No more that awful glance on playful wight,
Compell'd to kneel and tremble at the sight,
To fold his fingers, all in dread the while,

Till Mister Ashford soften'd to a smile;
No more that meek and suppliant look in prayer,
Nor the pure faith (to give it force), are there:—
But he is bless'd, and I lament no more
A wise good man contented to be poor.

ROGER CUFF.

Now to his grave was Roger Cuff convey'd,
And strong resentment's lingering spirit laid,
Shipwreck'd in youth, he home return'd, and found
His brethren three—and thrice they wish'd him drown'd.
"Is this a landman's love? Be certain then
We part for ever!"—and they cried, "Amen!"
His words were truth's:—Some forty summers fled;
His brethren died; his kin supposed him dead:
Three nephews these, one sprightly niece, and one,
Less near in blood—they call'd him *surly John;*
He worked in woods apart from all his kind,
Fierce were his looks and moody was his mind.
For home the Sailor now began to sigh:
"The dogs are dead, and I'll return and die;
When all I have, my gains, in years of care,
The younger Cuffs with kinder souls shall share:—
Yet hold! I'm rich;—with one consent they'll say,
'You're welcome, Uncle, as the flowers in May.'
No; I'll disguise me, be in tatters dress'd,
And best befriend the lads who treat me best."
Now all his kindred,—neither rich nor poor,—
Kept the wolf want some distance from the door.
In piteous plight he knock'd at George's gate,
And begg'd for aid, as he described his state:—
But stern was George;—"Let them who had thee strong,
Help thee to drag thy weaken'd frame along;
To us a stranger, while your limbs would move,
From us depart and try a stranger's love.
Ha! dost thou murmur?"—for, in Roger's throat,
Was "Rascal!" rising with disdainful note.
To pious James he then his prayer address'd;—
"Good lack," quoth James, "thy sorrows pierce my breast;
And, had I wealth, as have my brethren twain,
One board should feed us and one roof contain:
But plead I will thy cause and I will pray:
And so farewell! Heaven help thee on thy way!"
"Scoundrel!" said Roger, (but apart;)—and told
His case to Peter;—Peter too was cold:—
"The rates are high; we have a-many poor;
But I will think,"—he said, and shut the door.
Then the gay Niece the seeming pauper press'd:—
"Turn, Nancy, turn, and view this form distress'd:
Akin to thine is this declining frame,
And this poor beggar claims an Uncle's name."
"Avaunt! Begone!" the courteous maiden said,
"Thou vile impostor! Uncle Roger's dead:
I hate thee, beast; thy look my spirit shocks!
Oh! that I saw thee starving in the stocks!"
"My gentle niece!" he said—and sought the wood.—
"I hunger, fellow; prithee, give me food!"
"Give! am I rich? This hatchet take, and try
Thy proper strength, nor give those limbs the lie;
Work, feed thyself, to thine own powers appeal,
Nor whine out woes, thine own right-hand can heal:
And while that hand is thine and thine a leg,
Scorn of the proud or of the base to beg."
"Come, surly John, thy wealthy kinsman view,"
Old Roger said:—" thy words are brave and true;

Come, live with me: we'll vex those scoundrel boys,
And that prim shrew shall, envying, hear our joys.—
Tobacco's glorious fume all day we'll share,
With beef and brandy kill all kinds of care;
We'll beer and biscuit on our table heap,
And rail at rascals, till we fall asleep."
Such was their life: but when the woodman died,
His grieving kin for Roger's smiles applied—
In vain; he shut, with stern rebuke, the door,
And dying, built a refuge for the poor;
With this restriction, That no Cuff should share
One meal, or shelter for one moment there.

THE GENTLEMAN FARMER

(1812)

Gwyn was a farmer, whom the farmers all,
Who dwelt around, the Gentleman would call;
Whether in pure humility or pride,
They only knew, and they would not decide.
Far diff'rent he from that dull plodding tribe,
Whom it was his amusement to describe;
Creatures no more enliven'd than a clod,
But treading still as their dull fathers trod;
Who lived in times when not a man had seen
Corn sown by drill, or thresh'd by a machine:
He was of those whose skill assigns the prize
For creatures fed in pens, and stalls, and sties;
And who, in places where improvers meet,
To fill the land with fatness, had a seat;
Who in large mansions live like petty kings,
And speak of farms but as amusing things;
Who plans encourage, and who journals keep,
And talk with lords about a breed of sheep.
Two are the species in this genus known;
One, who is rich in his profession grown,
Who yearly finds his ample stores increase,
From fortune's favors and a favoring lease;
Who rides his hunter, who his house adorns;
Who drinks his wine, and his disbursements scorns;
Who freely lives, and loves to show he can—
This is the farmer made the gentleman.
The second species from the world is sent,
Tired with its strife, or with his wealth content;
In books and men beyond the former read,
To farming solely by a passion led,
Or by a fashion; curious in his land;
Now planning much, now changing what he plann'd;
Pleased by each trial, not by failures vex'd
And ever certain to succeed the next;
Quick to resolve, and easy to persuade—
This is the gentleman, a farmer made.
Gwyn was of these; he from the world withdrew
Early in life, his reasons known to few;
Some disappointment said, some pure good sense,
The love of land, the press of indolence;
His fortune known, and coming to retire,
If not a farmer, men had call'd him 'squire.
Forty and five his years, no child or wife
Cross'd the still tenor of his chosen life;
Much land he purchased, planted far around,
And let some portions of superfluous ground
To farmers near him, not displeased to say,
"My tenants," nor "our worthy landlord," they.
Fix'd in his farm, he soon display'd his skill
In small-boned lambs, the horse-hoe, and the drill;
From these he rose to themes of nobler kind,
And show'd the riches of a fertile mind;
To all around their visits he repaid,
And thus his mansion and himself display'd,
His rooms were stately, rather fine than neat.
And guests politely call'd his house a seat;
At much expense was each apartment graced,
His taste was gorgeous, but it still was taste;
In full festoons the crimson curtains fell,
The sofas rose in bold elastic swell;
Mirrors in gilded frames display'd the tints

Of glowing carpets and of color'd prints;
The weary eye saw every object shine,
And all was costly, fanciful, and fine.
As with his friends, he pass'd the social hours,
His generous spirit scorn'd to hide its powers;
Powers unexpected, for his eye and air
Gave no sure signs that eloquence was there;
Oft he began with sudden fire and force,
As loth to lose occasion for discourse;
Some, 'tis observed, who feel a wish to speak,
Will a due place for introduction seek;
On to their purpose step by step they steal,
And all their way, by certain signals, feel;
Others plunge in at once, and never heed
Whose turn they take, whose purpose they impede;
Resolved to shine, they hasten to begin,
Of ending thoughtless—and of these was Gwyn.
And thus he spake—
——"It grieves me to the soul
To see how man submits to man's control;
How overpower'd and shackled minds are led
In vulgar tracks, and to submission bred;
The coward never on himself relies,
But to an equal for assistance flies;
Man yields to custom as he bows to fate,
In all things ruled—mind, body, and estate;
In pain, in sickness, we for cure apply
To them we know not, and we know not why;
But that the creature has some jargon read,
And got some Scotchman's system in his head;
Some grave impostor, who will health insure,
Long as your patience or your wealth endure;
But mark them well, the pale and sickly crew,
They have not health, and can they give it you?
These solemn cheats their various methods choose;
A system fires them, as a bard his muse:
Hence wordy wars arise; the learn'd divide,
And groaning patients curse each erring guide.
"Next, our affairs are govern'd, buy or sell,
Upon the deed the law must fix its spell;
Whether we hire or let, we must have still
The dubious aid of an attorney's skill;
They take a part in every man's affairs,
And in all business some concern is theirs;
Because mankind in ways prescribed are found,
Like flocks that follow on a beaten ground,
Each abject nature in the way proceeds,
That now to shearing, now to slaughter leads.
"Should you offend, though meaning no offence,
You have no safety in your innocence;
The statute broken then is placed in view,
And men must pay for crimes they never knew:
Who would by law regain his plunder'd store,
Would pick up fallen merc'ry from the floor;
If he pursue it, here and there it slides;
He would collect it, but it more divides;
This part and this he stops, but still in vain,
It slips aside, and breaks in parts again;
Till, after time and pains, and care and cost,
He finds his labor and his object lost.
"But most it grieves me, (friends alone are round)
To see a man in priestly fetters bound;
Guides to the soul, these friends of Heaven contrive,
Long as man lives, to keep his fears alive;
Soon as an infant breathes, their rites begin;
Who knows not sinning, must be freed from sin;
Who needs no bond, must yet engage in vows;
Who has no judgment, must a creed espouse:
Advanced in life, our boys are bound by rules,
Are catechised in churches, cloisters, schools,
And train'd in thraldom to be fit for tools:
The youth grown up, he now a partner needs,
And lo! a priest, as soon as he succeeds.
What man of sense can marriage-rites approve?
What man of spirit can be bound to love?
Forced to be kind! compell'd to be sincere!
Do chains and fetters make companions dear?
Pris'ners indeed we bind; but though the bond

May keep them safe, it does not make them fond:
The ring, the vow, the witness, licence, prayers,
All parties known! made public all affairs!
Such forms men suffer, and from these they date
A deed of love begun with all they hate:
Absurd! that none the beaten road should shun,
But love to do what other dupes have done.
"Well, now your priest has made you one of twain,
Look you for rest? Alas! you look in vain.
If sick, he comes; you cannot die in peace,
Till he attends to witness your release;
To vex your soul, and urge you to confess
The sins you feel, remember, or can guess:
Nay, when departed, to your grave he goes,
But there indeed he hurts not your repose.
"Such are our burthens; part we must sustain,
But need not link new grievance to the chain;
Yet men like idiots will their frames surround
With these vile shackles, nor confess they're bound:
In all that most confines them they confide,
Their slavery boast, and make their bonds their pride;
E'en as the pressure galls them, they declare,
(Good souls!) how happy and how free they are!
As madmen, pointing round their wretched cells,
Cry, 'Lo! the palace where our honor dwells.'
"Such is our state; but I resolve to live
By rules my reason and my feelings give;
No legal guards shall keep enthrall'd my mind,
No slaves command me, and no teachers blind.
"Tempted by sins, let me their strength defy,
But have no second in a surplice by;
No bottle-holder, with officious aid,
To comfort conscience, weaken'd and afraid:
Then if I yield, my frailty is not known;
And, if I stand, the glory is my own.
"When Truth and Reason are our friends, we seem
Alive! awake!—the superstitious dream.
"Oh! then, fair Truth, for thee alone I seek,
Friend to the wise, supporter of the weak;
From thee we learn whate'er is right and just;
Forms to despise, professions to distrust;
Creeds to reject, pretensions to deride,
And, following thee, to follow none beside."
Such was the speech; it struck upon the ear
Like sudden thunder, none expect to hear.
He saw men's wonder with a manly pride,
And gravely smiled at guest electrified;
"A farmer this!" they said, "Oh! let him seek
That place where he may for his country speak;
On some great question to harangue for hours,
While speakers hearing, envy nobler powers!"
Wisdom like this, as all things rich and rare,
Must be acquired with pains, and kept with care;
In books he sought it, which his friends might view,
When their kind host the guarding curtain drew.
There were historic works for graver hours,
And lighter verse, to spur the languid powers;
There metaphysics, logic there had place;
But of devotion not a single trace—
Save what is taught in Gibbon's florid page,
And other guides of this inquiring age;
There Hume appear'd, and near, a splendid book
Composed by Gay's good Lord of Bolingbroke:
With these were mix'd the light, the free, the vain,
And from a corner peep'd the sage Tom Paine:
Here four neat volumes Chesterfield were named,
For manners much and easy morals famed;
With chaste Memoirs of Females, to be read
When deeper studies had confused the head.
Such his resources, treasures where he sought
For daily knowledge till his mind was fraught;

Then when his friends were present, for their use
He would the riches he had stored produce;
He found his lamp burn clearer, when each day
He drew for all he purposed to display:
For these occasions, forth his knowledge sprung,
As mustard quickens on a bed of dung;
All was prepared, and guests allow'd the praise,
For what they saw he could so quickly raise.
Such this new friend; and when the year came round,
The same impressive, reasoning sage was found:
Then, too, was seen the pleasant mansion graced
With a fair damsel—his no vulgar taste;
The neat Rebecca—sly, observant, still;
Watching his eye, and waiting on his will;
Simple yet smart her dress, her manners meek,
Her smiles spoke for her, she would seldom speak;
But watch'd each look, each meaning to detect,
And (pleased with notice) felt for all neglect.
With her lived Gwyn a sweet harmonious life,
Who, forms excepted, was a charming wife.
The wives indeed, so made by vulgar law,
Affected scorn, and censured what they saw;
And what they saw not, fancied; said 'twas sin,
And took no notice of the wife of Gwyn:
But he despised their rudeness, and would prove
Theirs was compulsion and distrust, not love;
"Fools as they were! could they conceive that rings
And parsons' blessings were substantial things?"
They answer'd "Yes;" while he contemptuous spoke
Of the low notions held by simple folk;
Yet, strange that anger in a man so wise
Should from the notions of these fools arise;
Can they so vex us, whom we so despise?
Brave as he was, our hero felt a dread
Lest those who saw him kind should think him led;
If to his bosom fear a visit paid,
It was, lest he should be supposed afraid:
Hence sprang his orders; not that he desired
The things when done: obedience he required;
And thus, to prove his absolute command,
Ruled every heart, and moved each subject hand,
Assent he ask'd for every word and whim,
To prove that *he alone was king of him.*
The still Rebecca, who her station knew,
With ease resign'd the honors not her due;
Well pleased, she saw that men her board would grace,
And wish'd not there to see a female face;
When by her lover she his spouse was styled,
Polite she thought it, and demurely smiled;
But when he wanted wives and maidens round
So to regard her, she grew grave, and frown'd;
And sometimes whisper'd—"Why should you respect
These people's notions, yet their forms reject?"
Gwyn, though from marriage bond and fetter free,
Still felt abridgment in his liberty;
Something of hesitation he betray'd,
And in her presence thought of what he said.
Thus fair Rebecca, though she walk'd astray,
His creed rejecting, judged it right to pray;
To be at church, to sit with serious looks,
To read her Bible and her Sunday-books:
She hated all those new and daring themes,
And call'd his free conjectures, "devil's dreams:"
She honor'd still the priesthood in her fall,
And claim'd respect and reverence for them all;
Call'd them "of sin's destructive power the foes,
And not such blockheads as he might suppose."
Gwyn to his friends would smile, and sometimes say,
"'Tis a kind fool, why vex her in her way?"
Her way she took, and still had more in view,

For she contrived that he should take it too.
The daring freedom of his soul, 'twas plain,
In part was lost in a divided reign;
A king and queen, who yet in prudence sway'd
Their peaceful state, and were in turn obey'd.
Yet such our fate, that when we plan the best,
Something arises to disturb our rest:
For though in spirits high, in body strong,
Gwyn something felt—he knew not what—was wrong;
He wish'd to know, for he believed the thing,
If unremoved, would other evil bring:
"She must perceive of late he could not eat,
And when he walk'd, he trembled on his feet:
He had forebodings, and he seem'd as one
Stopp'd on the road, or threaten'd by a dun;
He could not live, and yet, should he apply
To those physicians—he must sooner die."
The mild Rebecca heard with some disdain,
And some distress, her friend and lord complain:
His death she fear'd not, but had painful doubt
What his distemper'd nerves might bring about;
With power like hers she dreaded an ally,
And yet there was a person in her eye;—
She thought, debated, fix'd—"Alas!" she said,
"A case like yours must be no more delay'd:
You hate these doctors: well! but were a friend
And doctor one, your fears would have an end:
My cousin Mollet—Scotland holds him now—
Is above all men skilful, all allow;
Of late a doctor, and within a while
He means to settle in this favor'd isle;
Should he attend you, with his skill profound,
You must be safe, and shortly would be sound."
When men in health against physicians rail,
They should consider that their nerves may fail;
Who calls a lawyer rogue, may find, too late,
On one of these depends his whole estate:
Nay, when the world can nothing more produce,
The priest, th' insulted priest, may have his use;
Ease, health, and comfort, lift a man so high,
These powers are dwarfs that he can scarcely spy;
Pain, sickness, languor keep a man so low,
That these neglected dwarfs to giants grow.
Happy is he who through the medium sees
Of clear good sense—but Gwyn was not of these.
He heard and he rejoiced: "Ah! let him come,
And till he fixes, make my house his home."
Home came the doctor—he was much admired;
He told the patient what his case required;
His hours for sleep, his time to eat and drink;
When he should ride, read, rest, compose, or think.
Thus join'd peculiar skill and art profound,
To make the fancy-sick no more than fancy-sound.
With such attention, who could long be ill?
Returning health proclaim'd the doctor's skill.
Presents and praises from a grateful heart
Were freely offer'd on the patient's part;
In high repute the doctor seem'd to stand,
But still had got no footing in the land;
And, as he saw the seat was rich and fair,
He felt disposed to fix his station there:
To gain his purpose he perform'd the part
Of a good actor, and prepared to start;
Not like a traveller in a day serene,
When the sun shone and when the roads were clean;
Not like the pilgrim, when the morning gray,
The ruddy eve succeeding, sends his way;
But in a season when the sharp east wind
Had all its influence on a nervous mind;
When past the parlor's front it fiercely blew,

And Gwyn sat pitying every bird that flew,
This strange physician said—"Adieu! adieu!
Farewell!—Heaven bless you!—if you should—but no,
You need not fear—farewell! 'tis time to go."
The doctor spoke; and as the patient heard,
His old disorders (dreadful train!) appear'd;
"He felt the tingling tremor, and the stress
Upon his nerves that he could not express;
Should his good friend forsake him, he perhaps
Might meet his death, and surely a relapse."
So, as the doctor seem'd intent to part,
He cried in terror—"Oh! be where thou art:
Come, thou art young, and unengaged; oh! come,
Make me thy friend, give comfort to mine home;
I have now symptoms that require thine aid,
Do, doctor, stay"—th' obliging doctor stay'd.
Thus Gwyn was happy; he had now a friend,
And a meek spouse on whom he could depend:
But now possess'd of male and female guide,
Divided power he thus must subdivide:
In earlier days he rode, or sat at ease
Reclined, and having but himself to please;
Now if he would a fav'rite nag bestride
He sought permission—"Doctor, may I ride?"
(Rebecca's eye her sovereign pleasure told)—
"I think you may, but guarded from the cold,
Ride forty minutes."—Free and happy soul!
He scorn'd submission, and a man's control;
But where such friends in every care unite
All for his good, obedience is delight.
Now Gwyn a sultan bade affairs adieu,
Led and assisted by the faithful two;
The favorite fair, Rebecca, near him sat,
And whisper'd whom to love, assist, or hate;
While the chief vizier eased his lord of cares,
And bore himself the burden of affairs:
No dangers could from such alliance flow,
But from that law, that changes all below.
When wint'ry winds with leaves bestrew'd the ground,
And men were coughing all the village round;
When public papers of invasion told,
Diseases, famines, perils new and old;
When philosophic writers fail'd to clear
The mind of gloom, and lighter works to cheer;
Then came fresh terrors on our hero's mind—
Fears unforeseen, and feelings undefined.
"In outward ills," he cried, "I rest assured
Of my friend's aid; they will in time be cured:
But can his art subdue, resist, control
These inwards griefs and troubles of the soul?
Oh! my Rebecca! my disorder'd mind,
No help in study, none in thought can find;
What must I do, Rebecca?" She proposed
The parish guide; but what could be disclosed
To a proud priest?—"No! him have I defied,
Insulted, slighted—shall he be my guide?
But one there is, and if report be just,
A wise good man, whom I may safely trust;
Who goes from house to house, from ear to ear,
To make his truths, his Gospel truths appear;
True if indeed they be, 'tis time that I should hear:
Send for that man; and if report be just,
I, like Cornelius, will the teacher trust;
But if deceiver, I the vile deceit
Shall soon discover, and discharge the cheat."
To Doctor Mollet was the grief confess'd,
While Gwyn the freedom of his mind express'd;
Yet own'd it was to ills and errors prone,
And he for guilt and frailty must atone.
"My books, perhaps," the wav'ring mortal cried,
"Like men deceive—I would be satisfied;
And to my soul the pious man may bring

Comfort and light—do let me try the thing."
The cousins met, what pass'd with Gwyn was told:
"Alas!" the doctor said, "how hard to hold
These easy minds, where all impressions made
At first sink deeply, and then quickly fade;
For while so strong these new-born fancies reign,
We must divert them, to oppose is vain:
You see him valiant now, he scorns to heed
The bigot's threat'nings or the zealot's creed;
Shook by a dream, he next for truth receives
What frenzy teaches, and what fear believes;
And this will place him in the power of one
Whom we must seek, because we cannot shun."
Wisp had been ostler at a busy inn,
Where he beheld and grew in dread of sin;
Then to a Baptists' meeting found his way,
Became a convert, and was taught to pray;
Then preach'd; and being earnest and sincere,
Brought other sinners to religious fear:
Together grew his influence and his fame,
Till our dejected hero heard his name:
His little failings were a grain of pride,
Raised by the numbers he presumed to guide:
A love of presents, and of lofty praise
For his meek spirit and his humble ways;
But though this spirit would on flattery feed,
No praise could blind him and no arts mislead:—
To him the doctor made the wishes known
Of his good patron, but conceal'd his own;
He of all teachers had distrust and doubt,
And was reserved in what he came about;
Though on a plain and simple message sent,
He had a secret and a bold intent:
Their minds at first were deeply veil'd; disguise
Form'd the slow speech, and op'd the eager eyes;
Till by degrees sufficient light was thrown
On every view, and all the business shown.
Wisp, as a skilful guide who led the blind,
Had powers to rule and awe the vaporish mind;
But not the changeful will, the wavering fear to bind:
And should his conscience give him leave to dwell
With Gwyn, and every rival power expel
(A dubious point), yet he, with every care,
Might soon the lot of the rejected share;
And other Wisps be found like him to reign,
And then be thrown upon the world again:
He thought it prudent then, and felt it just,
The present guides of his new friend to trust;
True, he conceived, to touch the harder heart
Of the cool doctor, was beyond his art;
But mild Rebecca he could surely sway,
While Gwyn would follow where she led the way:
So to do good, (and why a duty shun,
Because rewarded for the good when done?)
He with his friends would join in all they plann'd,
Save when his faith or feelings should withstand;
There he must rest, sole judge of his affairs,
While they might rule exclusively in theirs.
When Gwyn his message to the teacher sent,
He fear'd his friends would show their discontent;
And prudent seem'd it to th' attendant pair,
Not all at once to show an aspect fair:
On Wisp they seem'd to look with jealous eye,
And fair Rebecca was demure and shy;
But by degrees the teacher's worth they knew,
And were so kind, they seem'd converted too.
Wisp took occasion to the nymph to say,
"You must be married: will you name the day?"
She smiled,—"'Tis well; but should he not comply,
Is it quite safe th' experiment to try?"—
"My child," the teacher said, "who feels remorse,
(And feels not he?) must wish relief of course;
And can he find it, while he fears the crime?—
You must be married; will you name the time?"
Glad was the patron as a man could be,
Yet marvell'd too, to find his guides agree;

"But what the cause?" he cried;" 'tis genuine love for me."
Each found his part, and let one act describe
The powers and honors of th' accordant tribe:—
A man for favor to the mansion speeds,
And cons his threefold task as he proceeds;
To teacher Wisp he bows with humble air,
And begs his interest for a barn's repair:
Then for the doctor he inquires, who loves
To hear applause for what his skill improves,
And gives for praise, assent,—and to the fair
He brings of pullets a delicious pair;
Thus sees a peasant with discernment nice,
A love of power, conceit, and avarice.
Lo! now the change complete: the convert Gwyn
Has sold his books, and has renounced his sin;
Mollet his body orders, Wisp his soul,
And o'er his purse the lady takes control;
No friends beside he needs, and none attend—
Soul, body, and estate, has each a friend;
And fair Rebecca leads a virtuous life—
She rules a mistress, and she reigns a wife.

THOMAS MOORE (1779–1852)

From *THE IRISH MELODIES*

(1807–1834)

GO WHERE GLORY WAITS THEE

AIR—*Maid of the Valley*

(1807)

Go where glory waits thee,
But, while fame elates thee,
Oh! still remember me.
When the praise thou meetest
To thine ear is sweetest,
Oh! then remember me.
Other arms may press thee,
Dearer friends caress thee,
All the joys that bless thee
Sweeter far may be;
But when friends are nearest,
And when joys are dearest,
Oh! then remember me.

When at eve thou rovest
By the star thou lovest,
Oh! then remember me.
Think, when home returning,
Bright we've seen it burning—
Oh! thus remember me.
Oft as summer closes,
When thine eye reposes,
On its lingering roses,
Once so loved by thee—
Think of her who wove them,
Her who made thee love them—
Oh! then remember me.

When, around thee dying,
Autumn leaves are lying,
Oh! then remember me.
And, at night, when gazing
On the gay hearth blazing,
Oh! still remember me.
Then should music, stealing
All the soul of feeling,
To thy heart appealing,
Draw one tear from thee;
Then let memory bring thee
Strains I used to sing thee—
Oh! then remember me.

OH! BREATHE NOT HIS NAME

AIR—*The Brown Maid*

(1807)

Oh! breathe not his name, let it sleep in the shade,
Where cold and unhonor'd his relics are laid:
Sad, silent, and dark be the tears that we shed,
As the night-dew that falls on the grass o'er his head!

But the night-dew that falls, though in silence it weeps,
Shall brighten with verdure the grave where he sleeps;
And the tear that we shed, though in secret it rolls,
Shall long keep his memory green in our souls.

OH! THINK NOT MY SPIRITS ARE ALWAYS AS LIGHT

AIR—*John O'Reilly the Active*

(1807)

Oh! think not my spirits are always as light,
And as free from a pang, as they seem to you now:
Nor expect that the heart-beaming smile of to-night
Will return with to-morrow to brighten my brow.
No;—life is a waste of wearisome hours,
Which seldom the rose of enjoyment adorns,
And the heart that is soonest awake to the flowers,
Is always the first to be touch'd by the thorns.
But send round the bowl, and be happy awhile:—
May we never meet worse, in our pilgrimage here
Than the tear that enjoyment may gild with a smile,
And the smile that compassion can turn to a tear!

The thread of our life would be dark Heaven knows!
If it were not with friendship and love intertwined;
And I care not how soon I may sink to repose,
When these blessings shall cease to be dear to my mind.
But they who have loved the fondest, the purest,
Too often have wept o'er the dream they believed;
And the heart that has slumber'd in friendship securest
Is happy indeed if 'twas never deceived.
But send round the bowl; while a relic of truth
Is in man or in woman, this prayer shall be mine,—
That the sunshine of love may illumine our youth,
And the moonlight of friendship console our decline.

THE HARP THAT ONCE THROUGH TARA'S HALLS

AIR—*Gramachree*

(1807)

The harp that once through Tara's halls
The soul of music shed,
Now hangs as mute on Tara's walls
As if that soul were fled.
So sleeps the pride of former days,
So glory's thrill is o'er,
And hearts that once beat high for praise
Now feel that pulse no more!

No more to chiefs and ladies bright
The harp of Tara swells;
The chord alone, that breaks at night,
Its tale of ruin tells.
Thus Freedom now so seldom wakes,
The only throb she gives
Is when some heart indignant breaks,
To show that still she lives!

THOUGH THE LAST GLIMPSE OF ERIN WITH SORROW I SEE

AIR—*Coulin*

(1807)

Though the last glimpse of Erin with sorrow I see,
Yet wherever thou art shall seem Erin to me;
In exile thy bosom shall still be my home,
And thine eyes make my climate wherever we roam.

To the gloom of some desert or cold rocky shore,
Where the eye of the stranger can haunt us no more,
I will fly with my Coulin,[1] and think the rough wind
Less rude than the foes we leave frowning behind.

And I'll gaze on thy gold hair, as graceful it wreathes,
And hang o'er thy soft harp, as wildly it breathes;
Nor dread that the cold-hearted Saxon will tear
One chord from that harp, or one lock from that hair.

1 A man wearing Coulins, long locks of hair, the wearing of which had been forbidden to the Irish by Henry VIII.

EVELEEN'S BOWER

AIR—*Unknown*

(1807)

Oh! weep for the hour,
When to Eveleen's bower
The Lord of the valley with false vows came;
The moon hid her light
From the heavens that night,
And wept behind her clouds o'er the maiden's shame.
The clouds pass'd soon
From the chaste cold moon,
And Heaven smiled again with her vestal flame;
But none will see the day,
When the clouds shall pass away,
Which that dark hour left upon Eveleen's fame.

The white snow lay
On the narrow path-way,
Where the Lord of the valley cross'd over the moor;
And many a deep print
On the white snow's tint
Show'd the track of his footstep to Eveleen's door.
The next sun's ray
Soon melted away
Every trace on the path where the false Lord came;
But there's a light above
Which alone can remove
That stain upon the snow of fair Eveleen's fame.

LET ERIN REMEMBER THE DAYS OF OLD

AIR—*The Red Fox*

(1807)

Let Erin remember the days of old,
Ere her faithless sons betray'd her;
When Malachi wore the collar of gold,[1]
Which he won from her proud invader;
When her kings, with standard of green unfurl'd,
Led the Red-Branch Knights to danger;—[2]
Ere the emerald gem of the western world
Was set in the crown of a stranger.

On Lough Neagh's bank as the fisherman strays,
When the clear, cold eve's declining,
He sees the round towers of other days,
In the wave beneath him shining!
Thus shall memory often, in dreams sublime,
Catch a glimpse of the days that are over;
Thus, sighing, look through the waves of time
For the long-faded glories they cover![3]

1 Malachi, king of Ireland in the tenth century wore a collar of gold taken from a Danish invader who was killed by him in single combat.

2 An ancient order of Irish knights.

THE SONG OF FIONNUALA[4]

AIR—*Arrah my dear Eveleen*

(1807)

Silent, oh Moyle! be the roar of thy water,
Break not, ye breezes, your chain of repose,
While murmuring mournfully, Lir's lonely daughter
Tells to the night-star her tale of woes.
When shall the swan, her death-note singing,
Sleep with wings in darkness furl'd?
When will Heaven, its sweet bell ringing,
Call my spirit from this stormy world?

Sadly, oh Moyle! to thy winter wave weeping,
Fate bids me languish long ages away;
Yet still in her darkness doth Erin lie sleeping,
Still doth the pure light its dawning delay!
When will that day-star, mildly springing,
Warm our isle with peace and love?
When will Heaven, its sweet bell ringing,
Call my spirit to the fields above?

AT THE MID HOUR OF NIGHT

AIR—*Molly, my Dear*

(1813)

At the mid hour of night, when stars are weeping, I fly

3 Tradition said that Lough Neagh had in ancient times flooded the country and inundated a whole region.

4 Fionnuala, daughter of Lir, was changed to a swan and doomed to fly over the lakes and rivers of Ireland till the land turned Christian.

To the lone vale we loved when life was warm in thine eye,
And I think that if spirits can steal from the regions of air
To revisit past scenes of delight, thou wilt come to me there,
And tell me our love is remember'd, even in the sky!

Then I sing the wild song it once was rapture to hear,
When our voices, commingling, breathed like one on the ear,
And, as Echo far off through the vale my sad orison rolls,
I think, oh, my love! 'tis thy voice from the kingdom of souls,
Faintly answering still the notes that once were so dear.

'TIS THE LAST ROSE OF SUMMER

AIR—*Groves of Blarney*

(1813)

'Tis the last rose of summer,
Left blooming alone;
All her lovely companions
Are faded and gone;
No flower of her kindred,
No rose-bud is nigh,
To reflect back her blushes,
Or give sigh for sigh!

I'll not leave thee, thou lone one!
To pine on the stem;
Since the lovely are sleeping,
Go, sleep thou with them.
Thus kindly I scatter
Thy leaves o'er the bed,
Where thy mates of the garden
Lie scentless and dead.

So soon may *I* follow,
When friendships decay,
And from Love's shining circle
The gems drop away!
When true hearts lie wither'd,
And fond ones are flown,
Oh! who would inhabit
This bleak world alone?

THE YOUNG MAY-MOON

AIR—*The Dandy O!*

(1813)

The young May-moon is beaming, love!
The glow-worm's lamp is gleaming, love!
How sweet to rove
Through Morna's grove,
While the drowsy world is dreaming, love.
Then awake!—the heavens look bright, my dear!
'T is never too late for delight, my dear!
And the best of all ways
To lengthen our days,
Is to steal a few hours from the night, my dear!

Now all the world is sleeping, love!
But the sage, his star-watch keeping, love!
And I, whose star,
More glorious far,
Is the eye from that casement peeping, love!
Then awake!—till rise of sun, my dear!
The sage's glass we'll shun, my dear!
Or, in watching the flight
Of bodies of light,
He might happen to take thee for one, my dear!

THE MINSTREL-BOY

AIR—*The Moreen*

(1813)

The Minstrel-Boy to the war is gone,
In the ranks of death you'll find him;
His father's sword he has girded on,
And his wild harp slung behind him.—
"Land of song!" said the warrior-bard,
"Though all the world betrays thee,
One sword, at least, thy rights shall guard,
One faithful harp shall praise thee!"

The Minstrel fell!—but the foeman's chain
Could not bring his proud soul under!
The harp he loved ne'er spoke again,
For he tore its chords asunder;
And said, "No chains shall sully thee,
Thou soul of love and bravery!
Thy songs were made for the pure and free,
They shall never sound in slavery!"

THE TIME I'VE LOST IN WOOING

AIR—*Peas upon a Trencher*

(1815)

The time I've lost in wooing,
In watching and pursuing
In Woman's eyes,

Has been my heart's undoing.
Though Wisdom oft has sought me
I scorn'd the lore she brought me,
My only books
Were Woman's looks,
And folly's all they've taught me.

Her smile when Beauty granted,
I hung with gaze enchanted,
Like him, the Sprite,
Whom maids by night
Oft meet in glen that's haunted.
Like him, too, Beauty won me,
But while her eyes were on me—
If once their ray
Was turn'd away,
Oh! winds could not outrun me.

And are those follies going?
And is my proud heart growing
Too cold or wise
For brilliant eyes
Again to set it glowing?
No—vain, alas! the endeavor
From bonds so sweet to sever;—
Poor Wisdom's chance
Against a glance
Is now as weak as ever!

DEAR HARP OF MY COUNTRY

AIR—*New Langolee*

(1815)

Dear Harp of my Country! in darkness I found thee;
The cold chain of silence had hung o'er thee long,
When proudly, my own Island Harp! I unbound thee,
And gave all thy chords to light, freedom, and song!
The warm lay of love and the light note of gladness
Have waken'd thy fondest, thy liveliest thrill;
But, so oft hast thou echoed the deep sigh of sadness,
That even in thy mirth it will steal from thee still.

Dear Harp of my Country! farewell to thy numbers,
This sweet wreath of song is the last we shall twine;
Go, sleep, with the sunshine of Fame on thy slumbers,
Till touch'd by some hand less unworthy than mine.
If the pulse of the patriot, soldier, or lover,
Have throbb'd at our lay, 't is thy glory alone;
I was *but* as the wind, passing heedlessly over,
And all the wild sweetness I waked was thy own.

O'DONOHUE'S MISTRESS[1]

AIR—*The Little and the Great Mountain*

(1821)

Of all the fair months, that round the sun
In light-link'd dance their circles run,
Sweet May, sweet May, shine thou for me!
For still, when thy earliest beams arise,
That youth who beneath the blue lake lies,
Sweet May, sweet May, returns to me.

Of all the smooth lakes, where daylight leaves
His lingering smile on golden eves,
Fair lake, fair lake, thou'rt dear to me;
For when the last April sun grows dim,
Thy Naiads prepare his steed for him
Who dwells, who dwells, bright lake, in thee.

Of all the proud steeds that ever bore
Young plumèd chiefs on sea or shore,
White steed, white steed, most joy to thee,
Who still, when the first young glance of spring,
From under that glorious lake dost bring,
Proud steed, proud steed, my love to me.

1 The particulars of the traditions respecting O'Donohue and his white horse, may be found in Mr. Weld's Account of Killarney, or more fully detailed in Dorrick's Letters. For many years after his death, the spirit of this hero is supposed to have been seen, on the morning of May-day, gliding over the lake on his favorite white horse, to the sound of sweet, unearthly music, and preceded by groups of youths and maidens, who flung wreaths of delicate spring-flowers in his path.

Among other stories, connected with this Legend of the Lakes, it is said there was a young and beautiful girl, whose imagination was so impressed with the idea of this visionary chieftain, that she fancied herself in love with him, and at last, in a fit of insanity, on a May-morning, threw herself into the lake.

While, white as the sail some bark unfurls,
When newly launch'd, thy long mane[1] curls
Fair steed, fair steed, as white and free;
And spirits, from all the lake's deep bowers,
Glide o'er the blue wave scattering flowers,
Fair steed, around my love and thee.

Of all the sweet deaths that maidens die,
Whose lovers beneath the cold wave lie,
Most sweet, most sweet, that death will be,
Which under the next May-evening's light,
When thou and thy steed are lost to sight,
Dear love, dear love, I'll die for thee.

I WISH I WAS BY THAT DIM LAKE

AIR—*I wish I was on yonder Hill*

(1824)

I wish I was by that dim lake,[2]
Where sinful souls their farewells take
Of this vain world, and half-way lie
In Death's cold shadow, ere they die.
There, there, far from thee,
Deceitful world, my home should be—
Where, come what might of gloom and pain,
False hope should ne'er deceive again!

The lifeless sky, the mournful sound
Of unseen waters, falling round—
The dry leaves quivering o'er my head,
Like man, unquiet even when dead—
These—ay—these should wean
My soul from Life's deluding scene,
And turn each thought, each wish I have,
Like willows, downward towards the grave.

As they who to their couch at night
Would welcome sleep, first quench the light,
So must the hopes that keep this breast
Awake, be quench'd ere it can rest.
Cold, cold, my heart must grow,
Unchanged by either joy or woe,
Like freezing founts, where all that's thrown
Within their current turns to stone.

1 The boatmen at Killarney call those waves which come on a windy day, crested with foam, "O'Donohue's white horses."

2 The entrance to St. Patrick's Purgatory, which, as the entrance to the world of the sinful dead, was famous throughout medieval Europe.

From *NATIONAL AIRS*
(1815)

ALL THAT'S BRIGHT MUST FADE

Indian Air

All that's bright must fade,—
The brightest still the fleetest;
All that's sweet was made
But to be lost when sweetest.
Stars that shine and fall;—
The flower that drops in springing;—
These, alas; are types of all
To which our hearts are clinging.
All that's bright must fade,—
The brightest still the fleetest;
All that's sweet was made
But to be lost when sweetest!

Who would seek or prize
Delights that end in aching?
Who would trust to ties
That every hour are breaking?
Better far to be
In utter darkness lying,
Than be blest with light, and see
That light for ever flying.
All that's bright must fade,—
The brightest still the fleetest;
All that's sweet was made
But to be lost when sweetest!

OFT, IN THE STILLY NIGHT

Scotch Air

Oft, in the stilly night,
Ere Slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond Memory brings the light
Of other days around me;
The smiles, the tears,
Of boyhood's years,
The words of love then spoken;
The eyes that shone,
Now dimm'd and gone,
The cheerful hearts now broken!
Thus, in the stilly night,
Ere Slumber's chain has bound me,
Sad Memory brings the light
Of other days around me.

When I remember all
The friends, so link'd together,
I've seen around me fall,
Like leaves in wintry weather;
I feel like one
Who treads alone

Some banquet-hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garland's dead,
And all but he departed!

Thus, in the stilly night,
Ere Slumber's chain has bound me,
Sad Memory brings the light
Of other days around me.

JAMES HOGG (1770–1835)

THE SKYLARK

(1810)

Bird of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin[1] o'er moorland and lea!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!

Wild is thy lay and loud,
Far in the downy cloud,
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.
Where, on thy dewy wing,
Where art thou journeying?
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.

O'er fell[2] and fountain sheen,
O'er moor and mountain green,
O'er the red streamer that heralds the day,
Over the cloudlet dim,
Over the rainbow's rim,
Musical cherub, soar, singing, away!

Then, when the gloaming comes,
Low in the heather blooms
Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!

KILMENY

(1813)

Bonnie Kilmeny gaed up the glen;
But it wasna to meet Duneira's men,
Nor the rosy monk of the isle to see,
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.
It was only to hear the yorlin[3] sing,
And pu' the cress-flower round the spring;
The scarlet hypp[4] and the hind-berrye,[5]
And the nest that hung frae the hazel tree;
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.
But lang may her minny[6] look o'er the wa';
And lang may she seek i' the greenwood shaw;[7]
Lang the laird o' Duneira blame,
And lang lang greet[8] or Kilmeny come hame!

When many lang day had come and fled,
When grief grew calm, and hope was dead,
When mass for Kilmeny's soul had been sung,
When the bedesman had pray'd and the dead-bell rung,
Late, late in the gloaming, when all was still,
When the fringe was red on the westlin hill,
The wood was sere, the moon i' the wane,
The reek o' the cot hung o'er the plain,
Like a wee cloud in the world its lane;[9]
When the ingle[10] lowed[11] wi' an eiry leme[12]—
Late, late in the gloaming Kilmeny came hame!

"Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?
Lang hae we sought baith holt and dean;
By burn,[13] by ford, by greenwood tree,
Yet you are halesome and fair to see.
Where gat ye that joup[14] o' the lily sheen?
That bonnie snood[15] o' the birk[16] sae green?
And those roses, the fairest that ever were seen?

1 morning song.
2 high wild field.
3 yellow-hammer.
4 berry of the dogrose.
5 European raspberry, or bramble-berry.

6 mother.
7 thicket.
8 weep.
9 alone.
10 fire-place.
11 blazed.
12 gleam.
13 brook.
14 coat; tunic.
15 fillet binding young girl's hair.
16 birch.

Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?"

Kilmeny look'd up wi' a lovely grace,
But nae smile was seen on Kilmeny's face;
As still was her look, and as still was her ee,
As the stillness that lay on the emerant[1] lea,
Or the mist that sleeps on a waveless sea.
For Kilmeny had been, she kenned not where,
And Kilmeny had seen what she could not declare;
Kilmeny had been where the cock never crew,
Where the rain never fell, and the wind never blew.
But it seemed as the harp of the sky had rung,
And the airs of heaven played round her tongue,
When she spoke of the lovely forms she had seen,
And a land where sin had never been;
A land of love and a land of light,
Withouten sun, or moon, or night;
Where the river swa'd[2] a living stream,
And the light a pure and cloudless beam;
The land of vision, it would seem,
A still, an everlasting dream.

In yon green wood there is a waik,[3]
And in that waik there is a wene,[4]
And in that wene there is a maike;[5]
That neither has flesh, nor blood, nor bane;
And down in yon greenwood he walks his lane.[6]

In that green wene Kilmeny lay,
Her bosom hap'd[7] wi' flowerets gay:
But the air was soft, and the silence deep,
And bonny Kilmeny fell sound asleep.
She kenned nae mair, nor open'd her ee,
Till wak'd by the hymns of a far countrye.

She woke on a couch of silk sae slim,
All striped wi' the bars of the rainbow's rim;
And lovely beings round were rife,
Who erst had travelled mortal life;
And aye they smiled and 'gan to speer,[8]
"What spirit has brought this mortal here?"

"Lang have I rang'd the world wide,"
A meek and reverend fere[9] replied;
"Baith night and day I have watched the fair,
Eident[10] a thousand years and mair.
Yes, I have watched o'er ilk degree,
Wherever blooms feminitye;
And sinless virgin, free of stain
In mind and body, found I nane.
Never since the banquet of time
Found I a virgin in her prime,
Till late this bonnie maiden I saw,
As spotless as the morning snaw;
Full twenty years she has lived as free
As the spirits that sojourn in this countrye:
I have brought her away from the snares of men,
That sin or death she never may ken."

They clasped her waist, and her hands sae fair,
They kissed her cheeks, and they kemmed her hair;
And round came many a blooming fere,
Saying, "Bonnie Kilmeny, ye're welcome here!
Women are freed of the littand[11] scorn,
O blessed be the day Kilmeny was born!
Now shall the land of the spirits see,
Now shall it ken what a woman may be!
Many lang year in sorrow and pain,
Many lang year through the world we've gane,
Commissioned to watch fair womankind,
For it's they who nurse the immortal mind.
We have watched their steps as the dawning shone,
And deep in the greenwood walks alone;
By lily bower and silken bed,
The viewless tears have been o'er them shed;
Have soothed their ardent minds to sleep,
Or left the couch of love to weep.
We have seen, we have seen! but the time maun[12] come,
And the angels will weep at the day of doom!

"O would the fairest of mortal kind
Aye keep these holy truths in mind,

1 emerald.
2 swayed; surged.
3 park.
4 bower.
5 being; mate.
6 alone.
7 heaped over.
8 ask.
9 fellow; companion.
10 diligent; attentive.
11 blushing.
12 must.

That kindred spirits their motions see,
Who watch their ways with anxious ee,
And grieve for the guilt of humanitye!
O, sweet to Heaven the maidèn's prayer,
And the sigh that heaves a bosom sae fair!
And dear to Heaven the words of truth
And the praise of virtue frae beauty's mouth!
And dear to the viewless forms of air,
The mind that kythes [1] as the body fair!

"O, bonny Kilmeny! free frae stain,
If ever you seek the world again,
That world of sin, of sorrow, and fear,
O tell of the joys that are waiting here;
And tell of the signs you shall shortly see;
Of the times that are now, and the times that shall be."

They lifted Kilmeny, they led her away,
And she walked in the light of a sunless day;
The sky was a dome of crystal bright,
The fountain of vision, and fountain of light;
The emerant fields were of dazzling glow,
And the flowers of everlasting blow.[2]
Then deep in the stream her body they laid,
That her youth and her beauty never might fade:
And they smil'd on Heaven, when they saw her lie
In the stream of life that wandered by.
And she heard a song, she heard it sung,
She ken'd not where, but sae sweetly it rung,
It fell on the ear like a dream of the morn,—
"O blest be the day Kilmeny was born!
Now shall the land of the spirits see,
Now shall it ken what a woman may be!
The sun that shines on the world sae bright,
A borrowed gleid [3] frae the fountain of light;
And the moon that sleeks [4] the sky sae dun,
Like a gouden [5] bow or a beamless sun,
Shall wear away and be seen nae mair,
And the angels shall miss them travelling the air.
But lang, lang after, baith nicht and day,
When the sun and the world have fled away;
When the sinner has gane to his waesome doom,
Kilmeny shall smile in eternal bloom!"

They bore her away, she wist not how,
For she felt not arm nor rest below;
But so swift they wained [6] her through the light,
'Twas like the motion of sound or sight;
They seemed to split the gales of air,
And yet nor gale nor breeze was there.
Unnumbered groves below them grew,
They came, they passed, and backward flew,
Like floods of blossoms gliding on,
A moment seen, in a moment gone.
Ah! never vales to mortal view
Appeared like those o'er which they flew,
That land to human spirits given,
The lowermost vales of the storied heaven;
From thence they can view the world below,
And heaven's blue gates with sapphires glow.
More glory yet unmeet to know.

They bore her far to a mountain green,
To see what mortal never had seen,
And they seated her high on a purple sward,
And bade her heed what she saw and heard,
And note the changes the spirits wrought,
For now she lived in the land of thought.
She looked, and she saw nor sun nor skies,
But a crystal dome of a thousand dyes:
She looked, and she saw nae land aright,
But an endless whirl of glory and light,
And radiant beings went and came,
Far swifter than wind, or the linkèd flame.
She hid her een frae the dazzling view;
She looked again, and the scene was new.

She saw a sun in a summer sky,
And clouds of amber sailing by;
A lovely land beneath her lay,
And that land had lakes and mountains gray;
And that land had valleys and hoary piles,
And marlèd [7] seas and a thousand isles
Its fields were speckled, its forests green,
And its lakes were all of the dazzling sheen,
Like magic mirrors, where shining lay

1 reveals itself.
2 bloom.
3 coal of fire.
4 glides over.
5 golden.
6 carried.
7 variegated.

The sun, and the sky, and the cloudlet gray;
Which heaved and trembled and gently swung,
On every shore they seemed to be hung:
For there they were seen on their downward plain
A thousand times and a thousand again;
In winding lake and placid firth.
Little peaceful heavens in the bosom of earth.

Kilmeny sighed and seemed to grieve,
For she found her heart to that land did cleave;
She saw the corn [1] wave on the vale;
She saw the deer run down the dale;
She saw the plaid and the broad claymore,[2]
And the brows that the badge of freedom bore,—
And she thought she had seen the land before.

She saw a lady sit on a throne,
The fairest that ever the sun shone on:
A lion licked her hand of milk,
And she held him in a leish of silk;
And a leifu' [3] maiden stood at her knee,
With a silver wand and melting ee;
Her sovereign shield till love stole in,
And poisoned all the fount within.

Then a gruff, untoward bedesman came,
And hundit [4] the lion and his dame;
And the guardian maid wi' the dauntless ee,
She dropped a tear, and left her knee;
And she saw till the queen frae the lion fled,
Till the bonniest flower o' the world lay dead;
A coffin was set on a distant plain,
And she saw the red blood fall like rain;
Then bonnie Kilmeny's heart grew sair,
And she turned away, and could look nae mair.

Then the gruff, grim carle [5] girned [6] amain,
And they trampled him down, but he rose again;
And he baited [7] the lion to deeds of weir,[8]
Till he lapped the blood to the kingdom dear;
And weening [9] his head was danger preef,[10]
When crowned with the rose and clover leaf,
He gowled [11] at the carle, and chased him away,
To feed wi' the deer on the mountain gray.
He gowled at the carle, and he gecked [12] at heaven,
But his mark was set and his arles given.[13]
Kilmeny a while her een withdrew;
She looked again, and the scene was new.

She saw before her fair unfurled
One-half of all the glowing world,
Where oceans rolled, and rivers ran,
To bound the aims of sinful man.
She saw a people, fierce and fell,
Burst frae their bounds like fiends of hell;
There lilies grew, and the eagle flew;
And she herkèd [14] on her ravening crew,
Till the cities and towers were wrapt in a blaze,
And the thunder it roared o'er the lands and the seas.
The widows wailed, and the red blood ran,
And she threatened an end to the race of man;
She never lened,[15] nor stood in awe,
Till caught by the lion's deadly paw.
Oh! then the eagle swinked [16] for life,
And brainzelled [17] up a mortal strife;
But flew she north, or flew she south,
She met wi' the gowl [18] o' the lion's mouth.

With a mooted [19] wing and waefu' maen,[20]
The eagle sought her eiry again;
But lang may she cower in her bloody nest,
And lang, lang sleek her wounded breast,
Before she sey [21] another flight,
To play wi' the norland lion's might.

But to sing the sights Kilmeny saw,
So far surpassing nature's law,

1 wheat.
2 Highland broadsword.
3 loyal.
4 hounded; incited.
5 fellow.
6 grinned.
7 set on.
8 dread.
9 thinking.
10 proof.
11 howled.
12 mocked.
13 His limit was found and his earnest money given,—*i. e.*, he had got his wages, his desert.
14 urged on.
15 rested; ceased.
16 struggled.
17 stirred.
18 howl.
19 moulted.
20 woful mien.
21 essay.

The singer's voice wad sink away,
And the string of his harp wad cease to play.
But she saw till the sorrows of man were by,
And all was love and harmony;—
Till the stars of heaven fell calmly away,
Like flakes of snaw on a winter day.

Then Kilmeny begged again to see
The friends she had left in her ain countrie,
To tell of the place where she had been,
And the glories that lay in the land unseen;
To warn the living maidens' fair,
The love of heaven, the spirits' care,
That all whose minds unmeled [1] remain
Shall bloom in beauty when time is gane.

With distant music, soft and deep,
They lulled Kilmeny sound asleep;
And when she awakened, she lay her lane,[2]
All happed with flowers, in the greenwood wene.
When seven long years had come and fled,
When grief was calm, and hope was dead,
Whence scarce was remembered Kilmeny's name,
Late, late in a gloamin' Kilmeny came hame.
And O, her beauty was fair to see,
But still and steadfast was her ee!
Such beauty bard may never declare,
For there was no pride nor passion there;
And the soft desire of maiden's een
In that mild face could never be seen.
Her seymar [3] was the lily flower,
And her cheek the moss-rose in the shower;
And her voice like the distant melodye,
That floats along the twilight sea.
But she loved to raike [4] the lanely glen,
And keep afar frae the haunts of men,
Her holy hymns unheard to sing,
To suck the flowers, and drink the spring;
But wherever her peaceful form appeared,
The wild beasts of the hill were cheered;
The wolf played blythely round the field,
The lordly byson lowed, and kneeled;
The dun deer wooed with manner bland,
And cowered beneath her lily hand.
And when at eve the woodlands rung,
When hymns of other worlds she sung
In ecstasy of sweet devotion,

1 unstained.
2 alone.
3 gown.
4 roam.

O, then the glen was all in motion!
The wild beasts of the forest came,
Broke from their boughts and faulds [5] the tame,
And goved [6] around, charmed and amazed;
Even the dull cattle crooned and gazed,
And murmured, and looked with anxious pain
For something the mystery to explain.
The buzzard came with the throstle-cock; [7]
The corby left her houf [8] in the rock;
The blackbird alang wi' the eagle flew;
The hind came tripping o'er the dew;
The wolf and the kid their raike [9] began,
And the kid and the lamb and the leveret [10] ran;
The hawk and the hern [11] attour them hung
And the merle and the mavis [12] forhooyed [13] their young;
And all in a peaceful ring were hurled—
It was like an eve in a sinless world!

When a month and a day had come and gane,
Kilmeny sought the greenwood wene;
There laid her down on the leaves sae green,
And Kilmeny on earth was never mair seen.
But O! the words that fell frae her mouth
Were words of wonder, and words of truth!
But all the land were in fear and dread,
For they kendna [14] whether she was living or dead.
It wasna her hame, and she couldna remain;
She left this world of sorrow and pain,
And returned to the land of thought again.

THE WITCH OF FIFE

(1813)

"Quhare haif ye been, ye ill womyne,
These three lang nightis fra hame?
Quhat garris [15] the sweit drap fra yer brow,
Like clotis of the saut sea faem?

5 pens and folds.
6 stared.
7 male mistlethrush.
8 raven left her haunt.
9 running.
10 young hare.
11 heron.
12 blackbird and thrush.
13 abandoned.
14 knew not.
15 causes.

"It fearis me muckil[1] ye haif seen
Quhat guid man never knew;
It fearis me muckil ye haif been
Quhare the gray cock never crew.

"But the spell may crack, and the brydel breck,
Then sherpe yer werde[2] will be;
Ye had better sleipe in yer bed at hame,
Wi' yer deire littil bairnis[3] and me."—

"Sit doune, sit doune, my leil[4] auld man,
Sit doune, and listin to me;
I'll gar the hayre stand on your crown,
And the cauld sweit blind yer ee.

"But tell nae wordis, my guid auld man,
Tell never word again;
Or deire[5] shall be yer courtisye.
And driche[6] and sair yer pain.

"The first leet[7] night, quhan the new moon set,
Quhan all was douffe and mirk,[8]
We saddled ouir naigis wi' the moon-fern leif,
And rode fra Kilmerrin kirk.[9]

"Some horses ware of the brume-cow[10] framit,
And some of the greine bay tree;
But mine was made of ane humloke schaw,[11]
And a stout stallion was he.

"We raide the tod[12] doune on the hill,
The martin on the law;[13]
And we huntyd the hoolet[14] out of brethe,
And forcit him doune to fa'.—"

"Quhat guid was that, ye ill womyne?
Quhat guid was that to thee?
Ye wald better haif been in yer bed at hame,
Wi' yer deire littil bairnis and me."—

"And aye we raide, and se merrily we raide,
Throw the merkist gloffis[15] of the night;
And we swam the floode, and we darnit[16] the woode,
Till we cam to the Lommond height.

"And quhan we cam to the Lommond height,
Se lythlye we lychtid doune;
And we drank fra the hornis that never grew,
The beer that was never brewin.

"Then up there raise ane wee wee man,
Fra neithe the moss-gray stane;
His fece was wan like the collifloure,
For he nouthir had blude nor bane.

"He set ane reid-pipe til his muthe,
And he playit se bonnilye,
Till the gray curlew and the black-cock flew
To listen his melodye.

"It rang se sweit through the grein Lommond,
That the nycht-winde lowner[17] blew;
And it soupit[18] alang the Loch Leven,
And wakinit the white sea-mew.

"It rang se sweit through the grein Lommond,
Se sweitly butt and se shill,[19]
That the wezilis laup out of their mouldy holis,
And dancit on the mydnycht hill.

"The corby craw cam gledgin[20] near,
The ern[21] gede veeryng bye;
And the troutis laup out of the Leven Loch,
Charmit with the melodye.

"And aye we dancit on the grein Lommond,
Till the dawn on the ocean grew:
Ne wonder I was a weary wycht
Quhan I cam hame to you."—

"Quhat guid, quhat guid, my weird weird wyfe,
Quhat guid was that to thee?
Ye wald better haif bein in yer bed at hame,
Wi' yer deire littil bairnis and me."—

1 much.
2 destiny will be severe.
3 children.
4 faithful.
5 wild, severe.
6 long drawn out.
7 opportune?
8 dull and dark.
9 church.
10 a sprig of broom.
11 hemlock bough.
12 fox.
13 Lowland.
14 owl.
15 darkest changes in atmosphere.
16 loitered through.
17 calmer.
18 swept.
19 so sweetly outdoors and so shrill.
20 looking asquint.
21 eagle.

"The second nycht, quhan the new moon set,
O'er the roaryng sea we flew;
The cockle-shell our trusty bark,
Our sailis of the grein sea-rue.

"And the bauld windis blew, and the fire-flauchtis flew,
And the sea ran to the skie;
And the thunner it growlit, and the sea-dogs howlit,
As we gaed scouryng bye.

"And aye we mountit the sea-grein hillis,
Quhill we brushit thro' the cludis of the hevin;
Than sousit dounright like the stern-shot light,
Fra the liftis [1] blue casement driven.

"But our taickil stood, and our bark was good,
And se pang [2] was our pearily prowe;
Quhan we culdna speil [3] the brow of the wavis,
We needilit [4] them throu belowe.

"As fast as the hail, as fast as the gale,
As fast as the mydnycht leme,[5]
We borit the breiste of the burstyng swale,
Or fluffit [6] i' the flotyng faem.

"And quhan to the Norraway shore we wan,
We muntyd our steedis of the wynde,
And we splashit the floode, and we darnit [7] the woode,
And we left the shouir behynde.

"Fleit is the roe on the grein Lommond,
And swift is the couryng grew; [8]
The reindeir dun can eithly [9] run,
Quhan the houndis and the hornis pursue.

"But nowther the roe, nor the rein-deir dun,
The hinde nor the couryng grew,
Culde fly owr montaine, muir, and dale,
As our braw steedis they flew.

"The dales war deep, and the Doffrinis [10] steep,
And we raise to the skyis ee-bree; [11]
Quhite,[12] quhite was our rode, that was never trode,
Owr the snawis of eternity!

"And quhan we cam to the Lapland lone,
The fairies war all in array;
For all the genii of the north
War keipyng their holiday.

"The warlock [13] men and the weird wemyng,
And the fays of the wood and the steip,
And the phantom hunteris all war there,
And the mermaidis of the deip.

"And they washit us all with the witch-water,
Distillit fra the muirland dew,
Quhill our beauty blumit like the Lapland rose,
That wylde in the foreste grew."—

"Ye lee, ye lee, ye ill womyne,
Se loud as I heir ye lee!
For the warst-faurd wyfe on the shoris of Fyfe
Is cumlye comparit wi' thee."—

"Then the mermaidis sang and the woodlandis rang,
Se sweitly swellit the quire;
On every cliff a herpe they hang,
On every tree a lyre.

"And aye they sang, and the woodlandis rang,
And we drank, and we drank se deip;
Then saft in the armis of the warlock men,
We laid us dune to sleip."—

"Away, away, ye ill womyne,
And ill deide met ye dee! [14]
Quhan ye hae pruvit se false to yer God,
Ye can never pruve true to me."—

"And there we learnit fra the fairy foke,
And fra our master true,
The wordis that can beire us throu the air,
And lokkis and barris undo.

"Last nycht we met at Maisry's cot;
Richt weil the wordis we know;
And we set a foot on the black cruik-shell,[15]
And out at the lum [16] we flew.

1 sky's.
2 crammed.
3 climb.
4 pierced.
5 flame.
6 tossed up and down?
7 loitered through.
8 crouching greyhound.
9 easily.
10 certain hills?
11 eyebrow.
12 white.
13 wizard.
14 death may you die!
15 The place where the iron chain hung over the fire, on hooks where pots were hung for cooking.
16 chimney.

"And we flew owr hill, and we flew owr dale,
And we flew owr firth and sea,
Until we cam to merry Carlisle,
Quhare we lightit on the lea.

"We gaed to the vault beyond the towr,
Quhare we enterit free as ayr;
And we drank, and we drank of the bishopis wyne
Quhill we culde drynk ne mair."—

"Gin [1] that be true, my guid auld wyfe,
Whilk thou hast tauld to me,
Betide my death, betide my lyfe,
I'll beire thee companye.

"Neist time ye guang to merry Carlisle
To drynk of the blude-reid wyne,
Beshrew [2] my heart, I'll fly with thee,
If the deil should fly behynde."—

"Ah! little do ye ken, my silly auld man,
The daingeris we maun dree; [3]
Last nychte we drank of the bishopis wyne,
Quhill near near taen war we.

"Afore we wan to the Sandy Ford,
The gor-cockis nichering flew;
The lofty crest of Ettrick Pen
Was wavit about with blue,
And, flichtering throu the ayr, we fand
The chill chill mornyng dew.

"As we flew owr the hillis of Braid,
The sun raise fair and cleir;
There gurly [4] James, and his baronis braw,
War out to hunt the deir.

"'Their bowis they drew, their arrowis flew,
And piercit the ayr with speide,
Quhill purpil fell the mornyng dew
Wi' witch-blude rank and reide.

"Littil do ye ken, my silly auld man,
The daingeris we maun dree;
Ne wonder I am a weary wycht
Quhan I come hame to thee."—

"But tell me the *word,* my guid auld wyfe,
Come tell it me speedilye;
For I lang to drynk of the guid reide wyne,
And to wyng the ayr with thee.

"Yer hellish horse I wilna ryde,
Nor sail the seas in the wynde;
But I can flee as weil as thee,
And I'll drynk quhill ye be blynd."—

"O fy! O fy! my leil auld man,
That word I darena tell;
It wald turn this warld all upside down,
And make it warse than hell.

"For all the lassies in the land
Wald munt the wynde and fly;
And the men wald doff their doublets syde,
And after them wald ply."—

But the auld guidman was ane cunnyng auld man,
And ane cunnyng auld man was he;
And he watchit, and he watchit for mony a nychte
The witches' flychte to see.

Ane nychte he darnit in Maisry's cot;
The fearless haggs cam in;
And he heard the word of awsome weird,[5]
And he saw their deidis of synn.

Then ane by ane they said that word,
As fast to the fire they drew;
Then set a foot on the black cruik-shell,
And out at the lum they flew.

The auld guidman cam fra his hole
With feire and muckil dreide,
But yet he culdna think to rue,
For the wyne cam in his head.

He set his foot in the black cruik-shell,
With ane fixit and ane wawlyng ee; [6]
And he said the word that I darena say,
And out at the lum flew he.

The witches skalit the moonbeam pale;
Deep groanit the trembling wynde;
But they never wist till our auld guidman
Was hoveryng them behynde.

They flew to the vaultis of merry Carlisle,
Quhare they enterit free as ayr;
And they drank and they drank of the bishopis wyne
Quhill they culde drynk ne mair.

The auld guidman he grew se crouse,
He dancit on the mouldy ground,
And he sang the bonniest sangs of Fyfe,
And he tuzzlit the kerlyngs [7] round.

1 if.
2 a curse on.
3 endure.
4 surly.
5 awesome and fateful significance.
6 eye looking wildly.
7 handled the old women roughly.

And aye he piercit the tither butt,
And he suckit, and he suckit se lang,
Quhill his een they closit, and his voice grew low,
And his tongue wald hardly gang.

The kerlyngs drank of the bishopis wyne
Quhill they scentit the morning wynde;
Then clove again the yielding ayr,
And left the auld man behynde.

And aye he sleipit on the damp damp floor,
He sleipit and he snorit amain;
He never dreamit he was far fra hame,
Or that the auld wyvis war gane.

And aye he sleipit on the damp damp floor,
Quhill past the mid-day highte,
Quhan wakenit by five rough Englishmen
That trailit him to the lychte.

"Now quha are ye, ye silly auld man,
That sleipis se sound and se weil?
Or how gat ye into the bishopis vault
Throu lokkis and barris of steel?"

The auld gudeman he tryit to speak,
But ane word he culdna fynde;
He tryit to think, but his head whirlit round,
And ane thing he culdna mynde:—
"I cam fra Fyfe," the auld man cryit,
"And I cam on the mydnycht wynde."

They nickit the auld man, and they prickit the auld man,
And they yerkit his limbis with twine,
Quhill the reide blude ran in his hose and shoon,
But some cryit it was wyne.

They lickit the auld man, and they prickit the auld man,
And they tyit him till ane stone;
And they set ane bele-fire him about,
To burn him skin and bone.

"O wae to me!" said the puir auld man,
"That ever I saw the day!
And wae be to all the ill wemyng
That lead puir men astray!

"Let nevir ane auld man after this
To lawless greide inclyne;
Let nevir ane auld man after this
Rin post to the deil for wyne."

The reike[1] flew up in the auld manis face,
And choukit him bitterlye;
And the lowe[2] cam up with ane angry blese,
And it syngit his auld breek-knee.[3]

He lukit to the land fra whence he cam,
For lukis he culde get nae mae;
And he thochte of his deire littil bairnis at hame,
And O the auld man was wae!

But they turnit their facis to the sun,
With gloffe[4] and wonderous glair,
For they saw ane thing beth lairge and dun,
Comin swaipin down the ayr.

That burd it cam fra the landis o' Fyfe,
And it cam rycht tymeouslye,[5]
For quha was it but the auld manis wyfe,
Just comit his dethe to see?

Scho put ane reide cap on his heide,
And the auld guidman lookit fain,
Then whisperit ane word intil his lug,[6]
And tovit[7] to the ayr again.

The auld guidman he gae ane bob,
I' the mids o' the burnyng lowe;
And the sheklis[8] that band him to the ring,
They fell fra his armis like towe.

He drew his breath, and he said the word,
And he said it with muckil glee,
Then set his fit on the burnyng pile,
And away to the ayr flew he.

Till ainee he clerit the swirlyng reike,
He lukit beth ferit and sad;
But whan he wan to the lycht blue ayr,
He lauchit as he'd been mad.

His armis war spred, and his heid was hiche,
And his feite stack out behynde;
And the laibies[9] of the auld manis cote
War wauffing[10] in the wynde.

1 smoke.
2 blaze.
3 knee of his breeches.
4 fright.
5 timely.
6 ear.
7 rose.
8 shackles, ropes.
9 loose ends.
10 waving.

And aye he neicherit,[1] and aye he flew,
For he thochte the ploy se raire;
It was like the voice of the gainder blue,
Quhan he flees throu the ayr.

He lukit back to the Carlisle men
As he borit the norlan sky;
He noddit his heide, and gae ane girn,[2]
But he nevir said guid-bye.

They vanisht far i' the liftis blue wale,[3]
Ne mair the English saw,
But the auld manis lauch cam on the gale,
With a lang and a loud gaffa.

May ever ilke man in the land of Fyfe
Read what the drinkeris dree;
And nevir curse his puir auld wife,
Rychte wicked altho scho be.

A BOY'S SONG

(1840)

Where the pools are bright and deep,
Where the gray trout lies asleep,
Up the river and o'er the lea,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the blackbird sings the latest,
Where the hawthorn blooms the sweetest
Where the nestlings chirp and flee,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the mowers mow the cleanest,
Where the hay lies thick and greenest;
There to trace the homeward bee,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the hazel bank is steepest,
Where the shadow falls the deepest,
Where the clustering nuts fall free,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Why the boys should drive away
Little maidens from their play,
Or love to banter and fight so well,
That's the thing I never could tell.

But this I know, I love to play,
Through the meadow, among the hay,
Up the water and o'er the lea,
That's the way for Billy and me.

1 neighed, or gave a horse laugh.
2 grin.
3 sky's blue veil.

MRS. FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS (1793–1835)

ENGLAND'S DEAD

(1822)

Son of the ocean isle!
Where sleep your mighty dead?
Show me what high and stately pile
Is reared o'er Glory's bed.

Go, stranger! track the deep,
Free, free, the white sail spread!
Wave may not foam, nor wild wind sweep,
Where rest not England's dead.

On Egypt's burning plains,
By the pyramid o'erswayed,
With fearful power the noon-day reigns,
And the palm-trees yield no shade.

But let the angry sun
From heaven look fiercely red,
Unfelt by those whose task is done,
There slumber England's dead.

The hurricane hath might
Along the Indian shore,
And far, by Ganges' banks at night
Is heard the tiger's roar.

But let the sound roll on!
It hath no tone of dread
For those that from their toils are gone;
—*There* slumber England's dead.

Loud rush the torrent-floods
The western wilds among,
And free, in green Columbia's woods,
The hunter's bow is strung.

But let the floods rush on!
Let the arrow's flight be sped!
Why should *they* reck whose task is done?
There slumber England's dead!

The mountain-storms rise high
In the snowy Pyrenees,
And toss the pine-boughs through the sky
Like rose-leaves on the breeze.

But let the storm rage on!
Let the forest-wreaths be shed!
For the Roncesvalles' field is won,
There slumber England's dead.

On the frozen deep's repose
'T is a dark and dreadful hour,
When round the ship the ice-fields close,
To chain her with their power.

But let the ice drift on!
Let the cold-blue desert spread!
Their course with mast and flag is done,
There slumber England's dead.

The warlike of the isles,
The men of field and wave!
Are not the rocks their funeral piles,
The seas and shores their grave?

Go, stranger! track the deep,
Free, free the white sail spread!
Wave may not foam, nor wild wind sweep,
Where rest not England's dead.

THE CAVERN OF THE THREE TELLS

SWISS TRADITION

(1825)

The three founders of the Helvetic Confederacy are thought to sleep in a cavern near the lake of Lucerne. The herdsmen call them the Three Tells; and say that they lie there in their antique garb, in quiet slumber; and when Switzerland is in her utmost need, they will awaken and regain the liberties of the land.

The Grütli, where the confederates held their nightly meetings, is a meadow on the shore of the Lake of Lucerne, or Lake of the Forest-cantons, here called the Forest-sea.

Oh! enter not yon shadowy cave,
Seek not the bright stars there,
Though the whispering pines that o'er it wave,
With freshness fill the air:
For there the Patriot Three,
In the garb of old arrayed,
By their native Forest-sea
On a rocky couch are laid.

The Patriot Three that met of yore
Beneath the midnight sky,
And leagued their hearts on the Grütli shore,
In the name of liberty!
Now silently they sleep
Amidst the hills they freed;
But their rest is only deep,
Till their country's hour of need.

They start not at the hunter's call,
Nor the Lammer-geyer's cry,
Nor the rush of a sudden torrent's fall,
Nor the Lauwine[1] thundering by!
And the Alpine herdsman's lay,
To a Switzer's heart so dear!
On the wild wind floats away,
No more for them to hear.

But when the battle-horn is blown
Till the Schreckhorn's peaks reply,
When the Jungfrau's cliffs send back the tone
Through their eagle's lonely sky;
When spear-heads light the lakes,
When trumpets loose the snows,
When the rushing war-steed shakes
The glacier's mute repose;

When Uri's beechen woods wave red
In the burning hamlet's light;
Then from the cavern of the dead,
Shall the sleepers wake in might!
With a leap, like Tell's proud leap,
When away the helm he flung,[2]
And boldly up the steep
From the flashing billow sprung!

They shall wake beside their Forest-sea,
In the ancient garb they wore
When they linked the hands that made us free,
On the Grütli's moonlight shore;
And their voices shall be heard,
And be answered with a shout,
Till the echoing Alps are stirred,
And the signal-fires blaze out.

And the land shall see such deeds again
As those of that proud day,
When Winkelried, on Sempach's plain,
Through the serried spears made way;
And when the rocks came down

1 Avalanche.

2 The point of rock on which Tell leaped from the boat of Gessler is marked by a chapel, and called the *Tellensprung*.

On the dark Morganten dell,
And the crowned casques,[1] o'er-thrown,
Before our fathers fell!

For the Kühreihen's[2] notes must never sound
In a land that wears the chain,
And the vines on freedom's holy ground
Untrampled must remain!
And the yellow harvest wave
For no stranger's hand to reap,
While within their silent cave
The men of Grütli sleep!

THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS

(1826)

The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods, against a stormy sky,
Their giant branches tost;

And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moored their bark
On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted came,
Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame;

Not as the flying come,
In silence and in fear,—
They shook the depths of the desert's gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer.

Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea!
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free!

The ocean-eagle soared
From his nest by the white wave's foam,
And the rocking pines of the forest roared—
This was their welcome home!

There were men with hoary hair,
Amidst that pilgrim-band—
Why had they come to wither there
Away from their childhood's land?

There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
—They sought a faith's pure shrine!

Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod!
They have left unstained what there they found—
Freedom to worship God!

THE AMERICAN FOREST GIRL

(1828)

A fearful gift upon thy heart is laid,
Woman!—a power to suffer and to love,
Therefore thou so canst pity.

Wildly and mournfully the Indian drum
On the deep hush of moonlight forests broke;—
"Sing us a death-song, for thine hour is come,"—
So the red warriors to their captive spoke.
Still, and amidst those dusky forms alone,
A youth, a fair-haired youth of England stood,
Like a king's son; though from his cheek had flown
The mantling crimson of the island-blood,
And his pressed lips looked marble.—Fiercely bright,
And high around him, blazed the fires of night,
Rocking beneath the cedars to and fro,
As the wind passed, and with a fitful glow
Lighting the victim's face:—But who could tell
Of what within his secret heart befell,
Known but to heaven that hour?—perchance a thought
Of his far home then so intensely wrought,
That its full image, pictured to his eye
On the dark ground of mortal agony
Rose clear as day!—and he might *see* the band,

1 *Crowned helmets*, as a distinction of rank, are mentioned in Simond's Switzerland.
2 The Kuhreihen, the celebrated *Rans des Vaches*.

Of his young sisters wandering hand in hand,
Where the laburnum drooped; or haply binding
The jasmine, up the door's low pillars winding;
Or, as day closed upon their gentle mirth,
Gathering with braided hair, around the hearth
Where sat their mother;—and that mother's face
Its grave sweet smile yet wearing in the place
Where so it ever smiled!—Perchance the prayer
Learned at her knee came back on his despair;
The blessing from her voice, the very tone
Of her *"Good-night,"* might breathe from boyhood gone!—
He started and looked up:—thick cypress boughs
Full of strange sound, waved o'er him, darkly red
In the broad stormy firelight;—savage brows,
With tall plumes crested and wild hues o'erspread,
Girt him like feverish phantoms; and pale stars
Looked through the branches as through dungeon bars,
Shedding no hope.—He knew, he felt his doom.—
Oh! what a tale to shadow with its gloom
That happy hall in England!—Idle fear!
Would the winds tell it?—Who might dream or hear
The secret of the forests?—To the stake
They bound him; and that proud young soldier strove
His father's spirit in his breast to wake,
Trusting to die in silence! He, the love
Of many hearts!—the fondly reared,—the fair,
Gladdening all eyes to see!—And fettered there
He stood beside his death-pyre, and the brand
Flamed up to light it, in the chieftain's hand.
He thought upon his God.—Hush! hark!—a cry
Breaks on the stern and dread solemnity,—
A step hath pierced the ring!—Who dares intrude
On the dark hunters in their vengeful mood?—
A girl—a young slight girl—a fawn-like child
Of green Savannas and the leafy wild,
Springing unmarked till then, as some lone flower,
Happy because the sunshine is its dower;
Yet one that knew how early tears are shed,—
For *hers* had mourned a playmate brother dead.

She had sat gazing on the victim long,
Until the pity of her soul grew strong;
And, by its passion's deepening fervor swayed,
Ev'n to the stake she rushed, and gently laid
His bright head on her bosom, and around
His form her slender arms to shield it wound
Like close Liannes; then raised her glittering eye
And clear-toned voice that said, "He shall not die!"

"He shall not die!"—the gloomy forest thrilled
To that sweet sound. A sudden wonder fell
On the fierce throng; and heart and hand were stilled,
Struck down, as by the whisper of a spell.
They gazed,—their dark souls bowed before the maid,
She of the dancing step in wood and glade!
And, as her cheek flushed through its olive hue,
As her black tresses to the night-wind flew,
Something o'ermastered them from that young mien—
Something of heaven, in silence felt and seen;
And seeming, to their child-like faith, a token
That the Great Spirit by her voice had spoken.

They loosed the bonds that held their captive's breath:
From his pale lips they took the cup of death;
They quenched the brand beneath the cypress tree;
"Away," they cried, "young stranger, thou art free!"

MOZART'S REQUIEM

(1828)

A requiem!—and for whom?
For beauty in its bloom?
For valor fallen—a broken rose or sword?
A dirge for king or chief,
With pomp of stately grief,
Banner, and torch, and waving plume deplored?

Not so, it is not so!
That warning voice I know,
From other worlds a strange mysterious tone;
A solemn funeral air
It called me to prepare,
And my heart answered secretly—my own!

One more then, one more strain,
In links of joy and pain
Mighty the troubled spirit to inthral!
And let me breathe my dower
Of passion and of power
Full into that deep lay—the last of all!

The last!—and I must go
From this bright world below,
This realm of sunshine, ringing with sweet sound!
Must leave its festal skies,
With all their melodies,
That ever in my breast glad echoes found!

Yet have I known it long,
Too restless and too strong
Within this clay hath been th' o'ermastering flame;
Swift thoughts, that came and went,
Like torrents o'er me sent,
Have shaken, as a reed, my thrilling frame.

Like perfumes on the wind,
Which none may stay or bind,
The beautiful comes floating through my soul;
I strive with yearnings vain,
The spirit to detain
Of the deep harmonies that past me roll!

Therefore disturbing dreams
Trouble the secret streams
And founts of music that o'erflow my breast;
Something far more divine
Than may on earth be mine,
Haunts my worn heart, and will not let me rest.

Shall I then *fear* the tone
That breathes from worlds unknown?—
Surely these feverish aspirations *there*
Shall grasp their full desire,
And this unsettled fire,
Burn calmly, brightly, in immortal air.

One more then, one more strain,
To earthly joy and pain
A rich, and deep, and passionate farewell!
I pour each fervent thought
With fear, hope, trembling, fraught,
Into the notes that o'er my dust shall swell.

THE CORONATION OF INEZ DE CASTRO[1]

(1830)

Tableau, où l'Amour fait alliance avec la Tombe; union redoutable de la mort et de la vie! *Madame de Stael.*

There was music on the midnight;—
From a royal fane it rolled,
And a mighty bell, each pause between,
Sternly and slowly tolled.
Strange was their mingling in the sky,
It hushed the listener's breath;
For the music spoke of triumph high,
The lonely bell, of death.

There was hurrying through the midnight—
A sound of many feet;
But they fell with a muffled fearfulness,
Along the shadowy street:
And softer, fainter, grew their tread,
As it neared the minster-gate,
Whence a broad and solemn light was shed
From a scene of royal state.

Full glowed the strong red radiance,
In the centre of the nave,
Where the folds of a purple canopy
Swept down in many a wave;
Loading the marble pavement old
With a weight of gorgeous gloom,

[1] For earlier handlings of this famous legend see the last canto of Camoens' "Lusiads" and Aphra Behn's "novel" *Agnes de Castro.*

For something lay 'midst their fretted gold,
Like a shadow of the tomb.

And within that rich pavilion,
High on a glittering throne,
A woman's form sat silently,
'Midst the glare of light alone.
Her jewelled robes fell strangely still—
The drapery on her breast
Seemed with no pulse beneath to thrill,
So stonelike was its rest!

But a peal of lordly music
Shook e'en the dust below,
When the burning gold of the diadem
Was set on her pallid brow!
Then died away that haughty sound,
And from the encircling band
Stept Prince and Chief, 'midst the hush profound,
With homage to her hand.

Why passed a faint, cold shuddering
Over each martial frame,
As one by one, to touch that hand,
Noble and leader came?
Was not the settled aspect fair?
Did not a queenly grace,
Under the parted ebon hair,
Sit on the pale still face?

Death! Death, canst *thou* be lovely
Unto the eye of Life?
Is not each pulse of the quick high breast
With thy cold mien at strife?
—It was a strange and fearful sight,
The crown upon that head,
The glorious robes, and the blaze of light,
All gathered round the Dead!

And beside her stood in silence
One with a brow as pale,
And white lips rigidly compressed,
Lest the strong heart should fail;
King Pedro, with a jealous eye,
Watching the homage done,
By the land's flower and chivalry,
To her, his martyred one.

But on the face he looked not,
Which once his star had been;
To every form his glance was turned,
Save of the breathless queen:
Though something, won from the grave's embrace,
Of her beauty still was there,
Its hues were all of that shadowy place,
It was not for *him* to bear.

Alas! the crown, the sceptre,
The treasures of the earth,
And the priceless love that poured those gifts,
Alike of wasted worth!
The rites are closed:—bear back the Dead
Unto the chamber deep!
Lay down again the royal head,
Dust with the dust to sleep!

There is music on the midnight—
A requiem sad and slow,
As the mourners through the sounding aisle
In dark procession go;
And the ring of state, and the starry crown,
And all the rich array,
Are borne to the house of silence down,
With her, that queen of clay!

And tearlessly and firmly
King Pedro led the train,—
But his face was wrapt in his folding robe,
When they lowered the dust again.
'T is hushed at last the tomb above,
Hymns die, and steps depart:
Who called thee strong as Death, O Love?
Mightier thou wast and art.

LET US DEPART

(1834)

It is mentioned by Josephus, that a short time previously to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the priests, going by night into the inner court of the temple to perform their sacred ministrations at the feast of Pentecost, felt a quaking, and heard a rushing noise, and, after that, a sound as of a great multitude saying, "Let us depart hence."

Night hung on Salem's towers,
And a brooding hush profound
Lay where the Roman eagle shone,
High o'er the tents around.

The tents that rose by thousands
In the moonlight glimmering pale;
Like white waves of a frozen sea,
Filling an Alpine vale.

And the temple's massy shadow
Fell broad, and dark, and still,
In peace, as if the Holy One
Yet watch'd his chosen hill.

But a fearful sound was heard
In that old fane's deepest heart,
As if mighty wings rush'd by,
And a dread voice raised the cry,
"Let us depart!"

Within the fated city
E'en then fierce discord raved,
Though o'er night's heaven the comet sword
Its vengeful token waved.

There were shouts of kindred warfare
Through the dark streets ringing high,
Though every sign was full which told
Of the bloody vintage nigh.

Though the wild red spears and arrows
Of many a meteor host,
Went flashing o'er the holy stars,
In the sky now seen, now lost.

And that fearful sound was heard
In the Temple's deepest heart,
As if mighty wings rush'd by,
And a voice cried mournfully,
"Let us depart!"

But within the fated city
There was revelry that night;
The wine-cup and the timbrel note,
And the blaze of banquet light.

The footsteps of the dancer
Went bounding through the hall,
And the music of the dulcimer
Summon'd to festival.

While the clash of brother weapons
Made lightning in the air,
And the dying at the palace gates
Lay down in their despair.

And that fearful sound was heard
At the Temple's thrilling heart,
As if mighty wings rush'd by,
And a dread voice raised the cry,
"Let us depart!"

THE LAST SONG OF SAPPHO

(1834)

Suggested by a sketch, the design of the younger Westmacott. It represents Sappho sitting on a rock above the sea, with her lyre cast at her feet.

Sound on, thou dark unslumbering sea!
My dirge is in thy moan:
My spirit finds response in thee.
To its own ceaseless cry—"Alone, alone!"

Yet send me back one other word,
Ye tones that never cease!
Oh! let your secret caves be stirr'd,
And say, dark waters! will ye give me *peace!*

Away! my weary soul hath sought
In vain one echoing sigh,
One answer to consuming thought
In human hearts—and will the *wave* reply?

Sound on, thou dark unslumbering sea,
Sound in thy scorn and pride!
I ask not, alien world, from thee,
What my own kindred earth hath still denied.

And yet I loved that earth so well
With all its lovely things!
—Was it for this the death-wind fell
On my rich lyre, and quench'd its living strings?

—Let them be silent at my feet!
Since broken even as they,
The heart whose music made them sweet,
Hath pour'd on desert-sands its wealth away.

Yet glory's light hath touch'd my name,
The laurel-wreath is mine—
—With a lone heart, a weary frame—
O restless deep! I come to make them thine!

Give to that crown, that burning crown,
Place in thy darkest hold!
Bury my anguish, my renown,
With hidden wrecks, lost gems, and wasted gold.

Thou sea-bird on the billow's crest,
Thou hast thy love, thy home;
They wait thee in the quiet nest,
And I, th' unsought, unwatch'd-for—I too come!

I, with this wingèd nature fraught;
These visions wildly free,
This boundless love, this fiery thought—
—*Alone* I come—oh! give me peace, dark sea!

JOHN CLARE (1793–1864)

SONG

(1821)

One gloomy eve I roam'd about
'Neath Oxey's hazel bowers,
While timid hares were darting out,
To crop the dewy flowers;
And soothing was the scene to me,
Right pleased was my soul,
My breast was calm as summer's sea
When waves forget to roll.

But short was even's placid smile,
My startled soul to charm,
When Nelly lightly skipt the stile,
With milk-pail on her arm:
One careless look on me she flung,
As bright as parting day;
And like a hawk from covert sprung,
It pounc'd my peace away.

AFTER READING IN A LETTER

PROPOSALS FOR BUILDING A COTTAGE

(1821)

Beside a runnel build my shed,
With stubbles cover'd o'er;
Let broad oaks o'er its chimney spread,
And grass-plats grace the door.

The door may open with a string,
So that it closes tight;
And locks would be a wanted thing,
To keep out thieves at night.

A little garden, not too fine,
Inclose with painted pales;
And woodbines, round the cot to twine,
Pin to the wall with nails.

Let hazels grow, and spindling sedge,
Bend bowering over-head;
Dig old man's beard from woodland hedge,
To twine a summer shade.

Beside the threshold sods provide,
And build a summer seat;
Plant sweet-briar bushes by its side,
And flowers that blossom sweet.

I love the sparrow's ways to watch
Upon the cotter's sheds,
So here and there pull out the thatch,
That they may hide their heads.

And as the sweeping swallows stop
Their flights along the green,
Leave holes within the chimney-top
To paste their nest between.

Stick shelves and cupboards round the hut,
In all the holes and nooks;
Nor in the corner fail to put
A cupboard for the books.

Along the floor some sand I'll sift,
To make it fit to live in;
And then I'll thank ye for the gift,
As something worth the giving.

JULY

(1827)

July, the month of Summer's prime,
Again resumes his busy time;
Scythes tinkle in each grassy dell,
Where solitude was wont to dwell;
And meadows, they are mad with noise
Of laughing maids and shouting boys,
Making up the withering hay
With merry hearts as light as play.
The very insects on the ground
So nimbly bustle all around,
Among the grass, or dusty soil,
They seem partakers in the toil.
The landscape even reels with life,
While 'mid the busy stir and strife
Of industry, the shepherd still
Enjoys his summer dreams at will,
Bent o'er his hook, or listless laid
Beneath the pasture's willow shade,
Whose foliage shines so cool and gray
Amid the sultry hues of day,

As if the morning's misty veil
Yet linger'd in its shadows pale;
Or lolling in a musing mood
On mounds where Saxon castles stood,
Upon whose deeply buried walls
The ivy'd oak's dark shadow falls,
He oft picks up with wond'ring gaze
Some little thing of other days,
Saved from the wrecks of time—as beads,
Or broken pots among the weeds,
Of curious shapes—and many a stone
From Roman pavements thickly strown,
Oft hoping, as he searches round,
That buried riches may be found,
Though, search as often as he will,
His hopes are disappointed still;
Or watching, on his mossy seat,
The insect world beneath his feet,
In busy motion here and there
Like visitors to feast or fair,
Some climbing up the rush's stem,
A steeple's height or more to them,
With speed, that sees no fear to stop,
Till perch'd upon its spiry top,
Where they awhile the view survey,
Then prune their wings, and flit away,—
And others journeying to and fro
Among the grassy woods below,
Musing, as if they felt and knew
The pleasant scenes they wander'd through,
Where each bent round them seems to be
Huge as a giant timber-tree.
Shaping the while their dark employs
To his own visionary joys,
He pictures such a life as theirs,
As free from Summer's sultry cares,
And only wishes that his own
Could meet with joys so thickly sown:
Sport seems the all that they pursue,
And play the only work they do.

The cow-boy still cuts short the day,
By mingling mischief with his play;
Oft in the pond, with weeds o'ergrown,
Hurling quick the plashing stone
To cheat his dog, who watching lies,
And instant plunges for the prize;
And though each effort proves in vain,
He shakes his coat, and dives again,
Till, wearied with the fruitless play,
He drops his tail, and sneaks away,
Nor longer heeds the bawling boy,
Who seeks new sports with added joy:
Now on some bank's o'erhanging brow
Beating the wasp's nest with a bough,
Till armies from the hole appear,
And threaten vengeance in his ear
With such determined hue-and-cry
As makes the bold besieger fly;
Then, pelting with excessive glee
The squirrel on the woodland-tree,
Who nimbles round from grain to grain,
And cocks his tail, and peeps again,
Half-pleased, as if he thought the fray
Which mischief made, was meant for play,
Till scared and startled into flight,
He instant tumbles out of sight.
Thus he his leisure hour employs,
And feeds on busy meddling joys
While in the willow-shaded pool
His cattle stand, their hides to cool.

Loud is the Summer's busy song,
The smallest breeze can find a tongue,
While insects of each tiny size
Grow teazing with their melodies,
Till noon burns with its blistering breath
Around, and day dies still as death.
The busy noise of man and brute
Is on a sudden lost and mute;
Even the brook that leaps along
Seems weary of its bubbling song,
And, so soft its waters creep,
Tired silence sinks in sounder sleep.
The cricket on its banks is dumb,
The very flies forget to hum;
And, save the waggon rocking round,
The landscape sleeps without a sound.
The breeze is stopt, the lazy bough
Hath not a leaf that dances now;
The tottergrass upon the hill,
And spiders' threads, are standing still;
The feathers dropt from moorhen's wing,
Which to the water's surface cling,
Are steadfast, and as heavy seem
As stones beneath them in the stream;
Hawkweed and groundsel's fanning downs
Unruffled keep their seedy crowns;
And in the oven-heated air,
Not one light thing is floating there,
Save that to the earnest eye,
The restless heat seems twittering by.
Noon swoons beneath the heat it made,
And flowers e'en wither in the shade,
Until the sun slopes in the west,
Like weary traveller, glad to rest,
On pillowed clouds of many hues;
Then nature's voice its joy renews,
And chequer'd field and grassy plain
Hum, with their summer songs again,
A requiem to the day's decline,
Whose setting sunbeams coolly shine,
As welcome to day's feeble powers
As falling dews to thirsty flowers.

Now to the pleasant pasture dells,
Where hay from closes sweetly smells,
Adown the pathway's narrow lane
The milking maiden hies again,
With scraps of ballads never dumb,
And rosy cheeks of happy bloom,
Tann'd brown by Summer's rude embrace,
Which adds new beauties to her face,
And red lips never pale with sighs,
And flowing hair, and laughing eyes
That o'er full many a heart prevail'd,
And swelling bosom loosely veiled,
White as the love it harbors there,
Unsullied with the taunts of care.

The mower now gives labor o'er,
And on his bench beside the door
Sits down to see his children play,
Smoking a leisure hour away:
While from her cage the blackbird sings,
That on the woodbine arbor hings;
And all with soothing joys receive
The quiet of a Summer's eve.

WILD BEES

(1908) [1]

These children of the sun which summer brings
As pastoral minstrels in her merry train
Pipe rustic ballads upon busy wings
And glad the cotters' quiet toils again.
The white nosed bee that bores its little hole
In mortared walls and pipes its symphonies,
And never absent couzen, black as coal,
That Indian-like bepaints its little thighs,
With white and red bedight for holiday,
Right earlily a-morn do pipe and play
And with their legs stroke slumbers from their eyes.
And aye so fond they of their singing seem
That in their holes abed at close of day
They still keep piping in their honey dreams,
And larger ones that thrum on ruder pipe
Round the sweet smelling closen and rich woods
Where tawny white and red flushed clover buds
Shine bonnily and bean fields blossom ripe,
Shed dainty perfumes and give honey food
To these sweet poets of the summer field,
Me much delighting as I stroll along
The narrow path that hay laid meadow yields,
Catching the windings of their wandering song.
The black and yellow bumble first on wing
To buzz among the sallow's early flowers,
Hiding its nest in holes from fickle Spring
Who stints his rambles with her frequent showers;
And one that may for wiser piper pass,
In livery dress half sables and half red,
Who laps a moss ball in the meadow grass
And hoards her stores when April showers have fled;
And russet commoner who knows the face
Of every blossom that the meadow brings,
Starting the traveller to a quicker pace
By threatening round his head in many rings,
These sweeten summer in their happy glee
By giving for her honey melody.

[1] All the remaining poems of Clare were published after his death.

HOME YEARNINGS

(1873)

O for that sweet, untroubled rest
That poets oft have sung!—
The babe upon its mother's breast,
The bird upon its young,
The heart asleep without a pain—
When shall I know that sleep again?

When shall I be as I have been
Upon my mother's breast
Sweet Nature's garb of verdant green
To woo to perfect rest—
Love in the meadow, field, and glen,
And in my native wilds again?

The sheep within the fallow field,
The herd upon the green,
The larks that in the thistle shield,
And pipe from morn to e'en—
O for the pasture, fields, and fen!
When shall I see such rest again?

I love the weeds along the fen,
More sweet than garden flowers,
For freedom haunts the humble glen
That blest my happiest hours.
Here prison injures health and me:
I love sweet freedom and the free.

The crows upon the swelling hills,
The cows upon the lea,

Sheep feeding by the pasture rills,
Are ever dear to me,
Because sweet freedom is their mate,
While I am lone and desolate.

I loved the winds when I was young,
When life was dear to me;
I loved the song which Nature sung,
Endearing liberty;
I loved the wood, the vale, the stream,
For there my boyhood used to dream.

There even toil itself was play;
'Twas pleasure e'en to weep;
'Twas joy to think of dreams by day,
The beautiful of sleep.
When shall I see the wood and plain,
And dream those happy dreams again?

MARY BATEMAN

(1873)

My love she wears a cotton plaid,
A bonnet of the straw;
Her cheeks are leaves of roses spread,
Her lips are like the haw.
In truth she is as sweet a maid
As true love ever saw.

Her curls are ever in my eyes,
As nets by Cupid flung;
Her voice will oft my sleep surprise,
More sweet than ballad sung.
O Mary Bateman's curling hair!
I wake, and there is nothing there.

I wake, and fall asleep again,
The same delights in visions rise;
There's nothing can appear more plain
Than those rose cheeks and those bright eyes.
I wake again, and all alone
Sits Darkness on his ebon throne.

All silent runs the silver Trent,
The cobweb veils are all wet through,
A silver bead's on every bent,
On every leaf a bleb of dew.
I sighed, the moon it shone so clear:
Was Mary Bateman walking here?

THE MORNING WALK

(1873)

The linnet sat upon its nest,
By gales of morning softly prest,
His green wing and his greener breast
Were damp with dews of morning:
The dog-rose near the oaktree grew,
Blush'd swelling 'neath a veil of dew,
A pink's nest to its prickles grew,
Right early in the morning.

The sunshine glittered gold, the while
A country maiden clomb the stile;
Her straw hat couldn't hide the smile
That blushed like early morning.
The lark, with feathers all wet through,
Looked up above the glassy dew,
And to the neighboring corn-field flew,
Fanning the gales of morning.

In every bush was heard a song,
On each grass blade, the whole way long,
A silver shining drop there hung,
The milky dew of morning.
Where stepping-stones stride o'er the brook
The rosy maid I overtook.
How ruddy was her healthy look,
So early in the morning!

I took her by the well-turned arm,
And led her over field and farm,
And kissed her tender cheek so warm,
A rose in early morning.
The spiders' lace-work shone like glass,
Tied up to flowers and cat-tail grass;
The dew-drops bounced before the lass,
Sprinkling the early morning.

Her dark curls fanned among the gales,
The skylark whistled o'er the vales,
I told her love's delightful tales
Among the dews of morning.
She cropt a flower, shook off the dew,
And on her breast the wild rose grew;
She blushed as fair, as lovely, too,
The living rose of morning.

TO MY WIFE—A VALENTINE

(1873)

O once I had a true love,
As blest as I could be:
Patty was my turtle dove,
And Patty she loved me.
We walked the fields together,
By roses and woodbine,
In Summer's sunshine weather,
And Patty she was mine.

We stopped to gather primroses,
And violets white and blue,

In pastures and green closes
All glistening with the dew.
We sat upon green mole-hills,
Among the daisy flowers,
To hear the small birds' merry trills,
And share the sunny hours.

The blackbird on her grassy nest
We would not scare away,
Who nuzzling sat with brooding breast
On her eggs for half the day.
The chaffinch chirruped on the thorn,
And a pretty nest had she;
The magpie chattered all the morn
From her perch upon the tree.

And I would go to Patty's cot,
And Patty came to me;
Each knew the other's very thought
Under the hawthorn tree.
And Patty had a kiss to give,
And Patty had a smile,
To bid me hope and bid me love,
At every stopping stile.

We loved one Summer quite away,
And when another came,
The cowslip close and sunny day,
It found us much the same.
We both looked on the selfsame thing,
Till both became as one;
The birds did in the hedges sing,
And happy time went on.

The brambles from the hedge advance,
In love with Patty's eyes:
On flowers, like ladies at a dance,
Flew scores of butterflies.
I claimed a kiss at every stile,
And had her kind replies.
The bees did round the woodbine toil,
Where sweet the small wind sighs.

Then Patty was a slight young thing;
Now she's long past her teens;
And we've been married many springs,
And mixed in many scenes.
And I'll be true for Patty's sake,
And she'll be true for mine;
And I this little ballad make,
To be her valentine.

MAID OF THE WILDERNESS

(1873)

Maid of the wilderness,
Sweet in thy rural dress,
Fond thy rich lips I press
Under this tree.

Morning her health bestows,
Sprinkles dews on the rose,
That by the bramble grows:
Maid happy be.
Womanhood round thee glows,
Wander with me.

The restharrow blooming,
The sun just a-coming,
Grass and bushes illuming,
And the spreading oak tree;

Come hither, sweet Nelly,

. . . . . .

The morning is loosing
Its incense for thee.
The pea-leaf has dews on;
Love, wander with me.

We'll walk by the river,
And love more than ever;
There's nought shall dissever
My fondness from thee.

Soft ripples the water,
Flags rustle like laughter,
And fish follow after;
Leaves drop from the tree.
Nelly, Beauty's own daughter,
Love, wander with me.

I AM!

(1873)

I am! yet what I am none cares or knows,
My friends forsake me like a memory lost;
I am the self-consumer of my woes,
They rise and vanish in oblivious host,
Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost;
And yet I am! and live with shadows tost

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
Into the living sea of waking dreams,
Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
And e'en the dearest—that I loved the best—
Are strange—nay, rather stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod;
A place where woman never smil'd or wept;
There to abide with my creator, GOD,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept:
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie;
The grass below—above the vaulted sky.

THOMAS HOOD (1799–1845)

FAIR INES

(1823[1]–1827)

I

O saw ye not fair Ines?
She's gone into the West,
To dazzle when the sun is down,
And rob the world of rest:
She took our daylight with her,
The smiles that we love best,
With morning blushes on her cheek,
And pearls upon her breast.

II

O turn again, fair Ines,
Before the fall of night,
For fear the Moon should shine alone,
And stars unrivall'd bright;
And blessed will the lover be
That walks beneath their light,
And breathes the love against thy cheek
I dare not even write!

III

Would I had been, fair Ines,
That gallant cavalier
Who rode so gayly by thy side,
And whisper'd thee so near!—
Were there no bonny dames at home
Or no true lovers here,
That he should cross the seas to win
The dearest of the dear?

IV

I saw thee, lovely Ines,
Descend along the shore,
With bands of noble gentlemen,
And banners waved before;
And gentle youth and maidens gay,
And snowy plumes they wore;—
It would have been a beauteous dream
—If it had been no more!

V

Alas, alas, fair Ines,
She went away with song,
With Music waiting on her steps,
And shoutings of the throng;
But some were sad, and felt no mirth,
But only Music's wrong,
In sounds that sang Farewell, Farewell
To her you've loved so long.

VI

Farewell, farewell, fair Ines,
That vessel never bore
So fair a lady on its deck,
Nor danced so light before,—
Alas for pleasure on the sea,
And sorrow on the shore!
The smile that blest one lover's heart
Has broken many more!

RUTH

(1827)

She stood breast high amid the corn,
Clasp'd by the golden light of morn,
Like the sweetheart of the sun,
Who many a glowing kiss had won.

On her cheek, an autumn flush,
Deeply ripen'd;—such a blush
In the midst of brown was born,
Like red poppies grown with corn.

Round her eyes her tresses fell,
Which were blackest none could tell,
But long lashes veil'd a light,
That had else been all too bright.

And her hat, with shady brim,
Made her tressy forehead dim;—
Thus she stood amid the stooks,
Praising God with sweetest looks:—

Sure, I said, heav'n did not mean,
Where I reap thou shouldst but glean,
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,
Share my harvest and my home.

[1] In *The London Magazine.*

I REMEMBER, I REMEMBER

(1827)

I remember, I remember,
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn;
He never came a wink too soon,
Nor brought too long a day,
But now, I often wish the night
Had borne my breath away!

I remember, I remember,
The roses, red and white,
The vi'lets, and the lily-cups,
Those flowers made of light!
The lilacs where the robin built,
And where my brother set
The laburnum on his birthday,—
The tree is living yet!

I remember, I remember
Where I was used to swing,
And thought the air must rush as fresh
To swallows on the wing;
My spirit flew in feathers then,
That is so heavy now,
And summer pools could hardly cool
The fever on my brow!

I remember, I remember
The fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky:
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heav'n
Than when I was a boy.

THE DEATH-BED

(1831) [1]

We watch'd her breathing thro' the night,
Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro.

So silently we seem'd to speak,
So slowly moved about,
As we had lent her half our powers
To eke her living out.

Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears our hopes belied—
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died.

For when the morn came dim and sad,
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed—she had
Another morn than ours.

THE DREAM OF EUGENE ARAM

(1829) [2]

'Twas in the prime of summer time,
An evening calm and cool,
And four-and-twenty happy boys
Came bounding out of school:
There were some that ran and some that leapt,
Like troutlets in a pool.

Away they sped with gamesome minds,
And souls untouch'd by sin;
To a level mead they came, and there
They drave the wickets in:
Pleasantly shone the setting sun
Over the town of Lynn.

Like sportive deer they coursed about,
And shouted as they ran,—
Turning to mirth all things of earth,
As only boyhood can;
But the Usher sat remote from all,
A melancholy man!

His hat was off, his vest apart,
To catch heaven's blessed breeze;
For a burning thought was in his brow,
And his bosom ill at ease:
So he lean'd his head on his hands, and read
The book between his knees!

Leaf after leaf he turn'd it o'er,
Nor ever glanced aside,
For the peace of his soul he read that book
In the golden eventide:
Much study had made him very lean,
And pale, and leaden-eyed.

At last he shut the ponderous tome,
With a fast and fervent grasp
He strain'd the dusky covers close,
And fix'd the brazen hasp:

1 In *The Englishman's Magazine.*

2 In *The Gem.*

"Oh, God! could I so close my mind,
And clasp it with a clasp!"

Then leaping on his feet upright,
Some moody turns he took,—
Now up the mead, then down the mead,
And past a shady nook,—
And, lo! he saw a little boy
That pored upon a book!

"My gentle lad, what is't you read—
Romance or fairy fable?
Or is it some historic page,
Of kings and crowns unstable?"
The young boy gave an upward glance,—
"It is 'The Death of Abel.'"

The Usher took six hasty strides,
As smit with sudden pain,—
Six hasty strides beyond the place,
Then slowly back again;
And down he sat beside the lad,
And talk'd with him of Cain;

And, long since then, of bloody men,
Whose deeds tradition saves;
Of lonely folk cut off unseen,
And hid in sudden graves;
Of horrid stabs, in groves forlorn,
And murders done in caves;

And how the sprites of injured men
Shriek upward from the sod,—
Ay, how the ghostly hand will point
To show the burial clod;
And unknown facts of guilty acts
Are seen in dreams from God!

He told how murderers walk the earth
Beneath the curse of Cain,—
With crimson clouds before their eyes,
And flames about their brain:
For blood has left upon their souls
Its everlasting stain!

"And well," quoth he, "I know, for truth,
Their pangs must be extreme,—
Woe, woe, unutterable woe,—
Who spill life's sacred stream!
For why? Methought, last night, I wrought
A murder, in a dream!

"One that had never done me wrong—
A feeble man and old;
I led him to a lonely field,—
The moon shone clear and cold:
Now here, said I, this man shall die,
And I will have his gold!

"Two sudden blows with a ragged stick,
And one with a heavy stone,
One hurried gash with a hasty knife,—
And then the deed was done:
There was nothing lying at my foot
But lifeless flesh and bone!

"Nothing but lifeless flesh and bone,
That could not do me ill;
And yet I fear'd him all the more,
For lying there so still:
There was a manhood in his look,
That murder could not kill!

"And, lo! the universal air
Seem'd lit with ghastly flame;—
Ten thousand thousand dreadful eyes
Were looking down in blame:
I took the dead man by his hand,
And call'd upon his name!

"Oh, God! it made me quake to see
Such sense within the slain!
But when I touch'd the lifeless clay,
The blood gush'd out amain!
For every clot, a burning spot
Was scorching in my brain!

"My head was like an ardent coal,
My heart as solid ice;
My wretched, wretched soul, I knew,
Was at the Devil's price:
A dozen times I groan'd; the dead
Had never groan'd but twice!

"And now, from forth the frowning sky,
From the Heaven's topmost height,
I heard a voice—the awful voice
Of the blood-avenging sprite:—
'Thou guilty man! take up thy dead
And hide it from my sight!'

"I took the dreary body up,
And cast it in a stream,—
A sluggish water, black as ink,
The depth was so extreme:—
My gentle Boy, remember this
Is nothing but a dream!

"Down went the corse with a hollow plunge,
And vanish'd in the pool;
Anon I cleansed my bloody hands,
And wash'd my forehead cool,
And sat among the urchins young,
That evening in the school.

"Oh, Heaven! to think of their white souls
And mine so black and grim!
I could not share in childish prayer,
Nor join in Evening Hymn:
Like a Devil of the Pit I seem'd,
'Mid holy Cherubim!

"And peace went with them, one and all,
And each calm pillow spread;
But Guilt was my grim Chamberlain
That lighted me to bed;
And drew my midnight curtains round,
With fingers bloody red!

"All night I lay in agony,
In anguish dark and deep,
My fever'd eyes I dared not close,
But stared aghast at Sleep:
For Sin had render'd unto her
The keys of Hell to keep!

"All night I lay in agony,
From weary chime to chime,
With one besetting horrid hint,
That rack'd me all the time;
A mighty yearning, like the first
Fierce impulse unto crime!

"One stern tyrannic thought, that made
All other thoughts its slave;
Stronger and stronger every pulse
Did that temptation crave,—
Still urging me to go and see
The Dead Man in his grave!

"Heavily I rose up, as soon
As light was in the sky,
And sought the black accursed pool
With a wild misgiving eye;
And I saw the Dead in the river bed,
For the faithless stream was dry.

"Merrily rose the lark, and shook
The dew-drop from its wing;
But I never mark'd its morning flight,
I never heard it sing:
For I was stooping once again
Under the horrid thing.

"With breathless speed, like a soul in chase
I took him up and ran—
There was no time to dig a grave
Before the day began:
In a lonesome wood, with heaps of leaves,
I hid the murder'd man!

"And all that day I read in school,
But my thought was other where;
As soon as the mid-day task was done,
In secret I was there:
And a mighty wind had swept the leaves,
And still the corse was bare!

"Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep,
For I knew my secret then was one
That earth refused to keep:
Or land or sea, though he should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep.

"So wills the fierce avenging Sprite,
Till blood for blood atones!
Ay, though he's buried in a cave,
And trodden down with stones,
And years have rotted off his flesh,—
The world shall see his bones!

"Oh, God! that horrid, horrid dream
Besets me now awake!
Again—again, with dizzy brain,
The human life I take;
And my red right hand grows raging hot
Like Cranmer's at the stake.

"And still no peace for the restless clay,
Will wave or mould allow;
The horrid thing pursues my soul,—
It stands before me now!"
The fearful Boy look'd up, and saw
Huge drops upon his brow.

That very night, while gentle sleep
The urchin eyelids kiss'd,
Two stern-faced men set out from Lynn
Through the cold and heavy mist;
And Eugene Aram walk'd between,
With gyves upon his wrist.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

(1844) [1]

A ROMANCE

[CONDENSED]

"A jolly place," said he, "in times of old,
But something ails it now: the place is curst."
HART-LEAP WELL, BY WORDSWORTH.

Some dreams we have are nothing else but dreams,

1 In *Hood's Magazine.*

Unnatural and full of contradictions;
Yet others of our most romantic schemes
Are something more than fictions.

It might be only on enchanted ground;
It might be merely by a thought's expansion;
But in the spirit, or the flesh, I found
An old deserted Mansion.

A residence for woman, child, and man,
A dwelling-place,—and yet no habitation;
A House,—but under some prodigious ban
Of excommunication.

Unhinged the iron gates half open hung,
Jarr'd by the gusty gales of many winters,
That from its crumbled pedestal had flung
One marble globe in splinters.

. . . . . .

No human figure stirr'd, to go or come,
No face look'd forth from shut or open casement,
No chimney smoked—there was no sign of Home
From parapet to basement.

With shatter'd panes the grassy court was starr'd;
The time-worn coping-stone had tumbled after;
And through the ragged roof the sky shone, barr'd
With naked beam and rafter.

O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

The flow'r grew wild and rankly as the weed,
Roses with thistles struggled for espial,
And vagrant plants of parasitic breed
Had overgrown the Dial.

But gay or gloomy, steadfast or infirm,
No heart was there to heed the hour's duration;
All times and tides were lost in one long term
Of stagnant desolation.

The wren had built within the Porch, she found
Its quiet loneliness so sure and thorough;
And on the lawn,—within its turfy mound,—
The rabbit made his burrow.

. . . . . .

Howbeit, the door I push'd—or so I dreamed—
Which slowly, slowly gaped,—the hinges creaking
With such a rusty eloquence, it seem'd
That Time himself was speaking.

But Time was dumb within that Mansion old,
Or left his tale to the heraldic banners
That hung from the corroded walls, and told
Of former men and manners.

Those tatter'd flags, that with the open'd door,
Seem'd the old wave of battle to remember,
While fallen fragments danced upon the floor
Like dead leaves in December.

The startled bats flew out—bird after bird—
The screechowl overhead began to flutter,
And seem'd to mock the cry that she had heard
Some dying victim utter!

A shriek that echoed from the joisted roof,
And up the stair, and further still and further,
Till in some ringing chamber far aloof
It ceased its tale of murther!

Meanwhile the rusty armor rattled round,
The banner shudder'd, and the ragged streamer;
All things the horrid tenor of the sound
Acknowledged with a tremor.

The antlers, where the helmet hung and belt,
Stirr'd as the tempest stirs the forest branches,
Or as the stag had trembled when he felt
The bloodhound at his haunches.

The window jingled in its crumbled frame,
And thro' its many gaps of destitution

Dolorous moans and hollow sighings came,
Like those of dissolution.

. . . . . .

The very stains and fractures on the wall
Assuming features solemn and terrific,
Hinted some Tragedy of that old Hall,
Lock'd up in hieroglyphic.

Some tale that might, perchance, have solved the doubt
Wherefore amongst those flags so dull and livid,
The banner of the Bloody Hand shone out,
So ominously vivid.

Some key to that inscrutable appeal,
Which made the very frame of Nature quiver;
And ev'ry thrilling nerve and fibre feel
So ague-like a shiver.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

. . . . . .

The floor was redolent of mould and must,
The fungus in the rotten seams had quicken'd;
While on the oaken table coats of dust
Perennially had thicken'd.

. . . . . .

There was so foul a rumor in the air,
The shadow of a Presence so atrocious;
No human creature could have feasted there,
Even the most ferocious.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

. . . . . .

'Tis hard for human actions to account,
Whether from reason or from impulse only—
But some internal prompting bade me mount
The gloomy stairs and lonely.

. . . . . .

Those dreary stairs, where with the sounding stress
Of ev'ry step so many echoes blended,
The mind, with dark misgivings, fear'd to guess
How many feet ascended.

The tempest with its spoils had drifted in,
Till each unwholesome stone was darkly spotted,
As thickly as the leopard's dappled skin,
With leaves that rankly rotted.

The air was thick—and in the upper gloom
The bat—or something in its shape—was winging;
And on the wall, as chilly as a tomb,
The Death's-Head moth was clinging.

. . . . . .

Such omens in the place there seem'd to be,
At ev'ry crooked turn, or on the landing,
The straining eyeball was prepared to see
Some Apparition standing.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

Yet no portentous Shape the sight amazed;
Each object plain, and tangible, and valid;
But from their tarnish'd frames dark Figures gazed,
And Faces spectre-pallid.

Not merely with the mimic life that lies
Within the compass of Art's simulation;
Their souls were looking thro' their painted eyes,
With awful speculation.

On ev'ry lip a speechless horror dwelt;
On ev'ry brow the burthen of affliction;
The old Ancestral Spirits knew and felt
The House's malediction.

Such earnest woes their features overcast,
They might have stirr'd, or sigh'd, or wept, or spoken,

But, save the hollow moaning of the blast,
The stillness was unbroken.

No other sound or stir of life was there,
Except my steps in solitary clamber,
From flight to flight, from humid stair to stair,
From chamber into chamber.

Deserted rooms of luxury and state,
That old magnificence had richly furnish'd
With pictures, cabinets of ancient date,
And carvings gilt and burnish'd.

Rich hangings, storied by the needle's art,
With scripture history, or classic fable;
But all had faded, save one ragged part,
Where Cain was slaying Abel.

The silent waste of mildew and the moth
Had marr'd the tissue with a partial ravage;
But undecaying frown'd upon the cloth
Each feature stern and savage.

. . . . . .

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

The Death-Watch tick'd behind the panell'd oak,
Inexplicable tremors shook the arras,
And echoes strange and mystical awoke,
The fancy to embarrass.

Prophetic hints that fill'd the soul with dread,
But thro' one gloomy entrance pointing mostly,
The while some secret inspiration said,
That Chamber is the Ghostly!

Across the door no gossamer festoon
Swung pendulous—no web—no dusty fringes,
No silky chrysalis or white cocoon
About its nooks and hinges.

The spider shunn'd the interdicted room,
The moth, the beetle, and the fly were banish'd,
And where the sunbeam fell athwart the gloom
The very midge had vanish'd.

One lonely ray that glanced upon a Bed,
As if with awful aim direct and certain,
To show the Bloody Hand in burning red
Embroider'd on the curtain.

And yet no gory stain was on the quilt—
The pillow in its place had slowly rotted;
The floor alone retain'd the trace of guilt,
Those boards obscurely spotted.

Obscurely spotted to the door, and thence
With mazy doubles to the grated casement—
Oh what a tale they told of fear intense,
Of horror and amazement!

What human creature in the dead of night
Had coursed like hunted hare that cruel distance?
Had sought the door, the window, in his flight,
Striving for dear existence?

What shrieking Spirit in that bloody room
Its mortal frame had violently quitted?—
Across the sunbeam, with a sudden gloom,
A ghostly Shadow flitted.

Across the sunbeam, and along the wall,
But painted on the air so very dimly,
It hardly veil'd the tapestry at all,
Or portrait frowning grimly.

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS

(1844)

One more unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death!

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!

Look at her garments
Clinging like cerements:
Whilst the wave constantly
Drips from her clothing;

Take her up instantly,
Loving, not loathing.—

Touch her not scornfully,
Think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly;
Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
Now is pure womanly.

Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
Rash and undutiful:
Past all dishonor,
Death has left on her
Only the beautiful.

Still, for all slips of hers,
One of Eve's family—
Wipe those poor lips of hers
Oozing so clammily.

Loop up her tresses
Escaped from the comb,
Her fair auburn tresses;
Whilst wonderment guesses
Where was her home?

Who was her father?
Who was her mother?
Had she a sister?
Had she a brother?
Or was there a dearer one
Still, and a nearer one
Yet, than all other?

Alas! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!
Oh! it was pitiful!
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none.

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly
Feelings had changed:
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence;
Even God's providence
Seeming estranged.

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
With many a light
From window and casement,
From garret to basement,
She stood, with amazement,
Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver,
But not the dark arch,
Or the black flowing river:
Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurl'd—
Any where, any where
Out of the world!

In she plunged boldly,
No matter how coldly
The rough river ran,—
Over the brink of it,
Picture it—think of it,
Dissolute Man!
Lave in it, drink of it
Then, if you can!

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!

Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
Decently,—kindly,—
Smooth, and compose them,
And her eyes, close them,
Staring so blindly!

Dreadfully staring
Thro' muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
Fix'd on futurity.

Perishing gloomily,
Spurr'd by contumely,
Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,
Into her rest.—
Cross her hands humbly
As if praying dumbly,
Over her breast!

Owning her weakness,
Her evil behavior,
And leaving, with meekness,
Her sins to her Saviour!

√ THE SONG OF THE SHIRT

(1843) [1]

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,

1 In *Punch.*

A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the "Song of the Shirt!"

"Work! work! work!
While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work,
Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's Oh! to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian work!

"Work—work—work
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

"Oh, Men, with Sisters dear!
"Oh, Men, with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

"But why do I talk of Death?
That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep;
Oh, God! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap!

"Work—work—work!
My labor never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread—and rags.
That shatter'd roof—and this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

"Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work—work—work—
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd,
As well as the weary hand.

"Work—work—work,
In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright—
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling,
As if to show me their sunny backs
And twit me with the spring.

"Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet,
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

"Oh! but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!"

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,
Would that its tone could reach the Rich!
She sang this "Song of the Shirt!"

FAITHLESS SALLY BROWN

AN OLD BALLAD

(1822[1]–1826)

Young Ben he was a nice young man,
A carpenter by trade;
And he fell in love with Sally Brown,
That was a lady's maid.

1 In *The London Magazine.*

But as they fetch'd a walk one day,
They met a press-gang crew;
And Sally she did faint away,
Whilst Ben he was brought to.

The Boatswain swore with wicked words,
Enough to shock a saint,
That, though she did seem in a fit,
'Twas nothing but a feint.

"Come, girl," said he, "hold up your head,
He'll be as good as me;
For when your swain is in our boat,
A boatswain he will be."

So when they'd made their game of her,
And taken off her elf,
She roused, and found she only was
A coming to herself.

"And is he gone, and is he gone?"
She cried, and wept outright:
"Then I will to the water side,
And see him out of sight."

A waterman came up to her,
"Now, young woman," said he,
"If you weep on so, you will make
Eye-water in the sea."

"Alas! they've taken my beau, Ben,
To sail with old Benbow"[1];
And her woe began to run afresh,
As if she'd said, Gee woe!

Says he, "They've only taken him
To the Tender-ship, you see";
"The Tender-ship," cried Sally Brown,
"What a hard-ship that must be!

"Oh! would I were a mermaid now,
For then I'd follow him;
But Oh!—I'm not a fish-woman,
And so I cannot swim.

"Alas! I was not born beneath
The virgin and the scales,
So I must curse my cruel stars,
And walk about in Wales."

Now Ben had sail'd to many a place
That's underneath the world;
But in two years the ship came home
And all her sails were furl'd.

But when he call'd on Sally Brown,
To see how she got on,
He found she'd got another Ben,
Whose Christian-name was John.

"Oh, Sally Brown, Oh, Sally Brown,
How could you serve me so,
I've met with many a breeze before,
But never such a blow!"

Then reading on his 'bacco box,
He heaved a heavy sigh,
And then began to eye his pipe,
And then to pipe his eye.

And then he tried to sing "All's Well,"
But could not, though he tried;
His head was turn'd, and so he chew'd
His pigtail[2] till he died.

His death, which happen'd in his berth,
At forty-odd befell:
They went and told the sexton, and
The sexton toll'd the bell.

FAITHLESS NELLY GRAY

A PATHETIC BALLAD

(1826)

Ben Battle was a soldier bold,
And used to war's alarms;
But a cannon-ball took off his legs,
So he laid down his arms!

Now as they bore him off the field,
Said he, "Let others shoot,
For here I leave my second leg,
And the Forty-second Foot!"

The army-surgeons made him limbs:
Said he, "They're only pegs:
But there's as wooden members quite,
As represent my legs!"

Now Ben he loved a pretty, maid,
Her name was Nelly Gray;
So he went to pay her his devours,
When he devoured his pay!

But when he called on Nelly Gray,
She made him quite a scoff;
And when she saw his wooden legs,
Began to take them off!

"Oh, Nelly Gray! Oh, Nelly Gray
Is this your love so warm?
The love that loves a scarlet coat
Should be more uniform!"

Said she, "I loved a soldier once,
For he was blithe and brave,

1 Admiral Benbow.

2 pigtail tobacco, a variety often used by sailors.

But I will never have a man
With both legs in the grave!

"Before you had those timber toes,
Your love I did allow,
But then, you know, you stand upon
Another footing now!"

"Oh, Nelly Gray! Oh, Nelly Gray!
For all your jeering speeches,
At duty's call, I left my legs,
In Badajos's *breaches!*"

"Why then," said she, "you've lost the feet
Of legs in war's alarms,
And now you cannot wear your shoes
Upon your feats of arms!"

"Oh, false and fickle Nelly Gray!
I know why you refuse:—
Though I've no feet—some other man
Is standing in my shoes!

"I wish I ne'er had seen your face;
But, now, a long farewell!
For you will be my death;—alas!
You will not be my *Nell!*"

Now when he went from Nelly Gray,
His heart so heavy got—
And life was such a burthen grown,
It made him take a knot!

So round his melancholy neck,
A rope he did entwine,
And, for his second time in life,
Enlisted in the Line!

One end he tied around a beam,
And then removed his pegs,
And, as his legs were off,—of course,
He soon was off his legs!

And there he hung, till he was dead
As any nail in town,—
For, though distress had cut him up,
It could not cut him down!

A dozen men sat on his corpse,
To find out why he died—
And they buried Ben in four cross-roads,
With a *stake* in his inside!

MARY'S GHOST

A PATHETIC BALLAD

(1827)

'Twas in the middle of the night,
To sleep young William tried,
When Mary's ghost came stealing in,
And stood at his bedside.

O William dear! O William dear!
My rest eternal ceases;
Alas! my everlasting peace
Is broken into pieces.

I thought the last of all my cares
Would end with my last minute;
But though I went to my long home
I didn't stay long in it.

The body-snatchers they have come,
And made a snatch at me;
It's very hard them kind of men
Won't let a body be!

You thought that I was buried deep,
Quite decent-like and chary;
But from her grave in Mary-bone
They've come and boned your Mary.

The arm that used to take your arm
Is took to Dr. Vyse;
And both my legs are gone to walk
The hospital at Guy's.

I vowed that you should have my hand,
But Fate gives us denial;
You'll find it there, at Doctor Bell's,
In spirits and a phial.

As for my feet, the little feet
You used to call so pretty.
There's one, I know, in Bedford Row,
The t'other's in the city.

I can't tell where my head is gone,
But Doctor Carpue can;
As for my trunk, it's all packed up
To go by Pickford's van.

I wish you'd go to Mr. P.
And save me such a ride,
I don't half like the outside place
They've took for my inside.

The cock it crows—I must be gone!
My William, we must part!
But I'll be yours in death, although
Sir Astley has my heart!

Don't go to weep upon my grave,
And think that there I be;
They haven't left an atom there
Of my anatomie.

THE CIGAR

(1833)[1]

"Here comes Mr. Puff"—THE CRITIC.
"I knew by the smoke that so gracefully curled."—MOORE.

Some sigh for this and that,
My wishes don't go far,
The world may wag at will,
So I have my cigar.

Some fret themselves to death
With Whig and Tory jar;
I don't care which is in,
So I have my cigar.

Sir John requests my vote,
And so does Mr. Marr;
I don't care how it goes,
So I have my cigar.

Some want a German row,
Some wish a Russian war;
I care not. I'm at peace,
So I have my cigar.

I never see the Post,
I seldom read the Star;
The Globe I scarcely heed,
So I have my cigar.

They tell me that Bank Stock
Is sunk much under par;
It's all the same to me,
So I have my cigar.

Honors have come to men,
My juniors at the Bar;
No matter,—I can wait,
So I have my cigar.

Ambition frets me not;
A cab or glory's car
Are just the same to me,
So I have my cigar.

I worship no vain gods,
But serve the household Lar;
I'm sure to be at home,
So I have my cigar.

I do not seek for fame,
A General with a scar;
A private let me be,
So I have my cigar.

To have my choice among
The toys of life's bazaar,
The deuce may take them all,
So I have my cigar.

Some minds are often tost
By tempests like a tar;
I always seem in port,
So I have my cigar.

The ardent flame of love
My bosom cannot char,
I smoke, but do not burn,
So I have my cigar.

They tell me Nancy Low
Has married Mr. R.;
The jilt! but I can live,
So I have my cigar.

1 In *The Comic Annual.*

A PARENTAL ODE TO MY SON, AGED THREE YEARS AND FIVE MONTHS

(1837)[2]

Thou happy, happy elf!
(But stop,—first let me kiss away that tear)—
Thou tiny image of myself!
(My love, he's poking peas into his ear!)
Thou merry, laughing sprite!
With spirits feather-light,
Untouch'd by sorrow, and unsoil'd by sin—
(Good heavens! the child is swallowing a pin!)

Thou little tricksy Puck!
With antic toys so funnily bestuck,
Light as the singing bird that wings the air—
(The door! the door! he'll tumble down the stair!)
Thou darling of thy sire!
(Why, Jane, he'll set his pinafore a-fire!)
Thou imp of mirth and joy!
In Love's dear chain so strong and bright a link,
Thou idol of thy parents—(Drat the boy! There goes my ink!)

Thou cherub—but of earth;
Fit playfellow for Fays, by moonlight pale,
In harmless sport and mirth,
(That dog will bite him if he pulls its tail!)

2 In *Blackwood's Magazine.*

Thou human humming-bee, extracting honey
From ev'ry blossom in the world that blows,
Singing in Youth's Elysium ever sunny,
(Another tumble!—that's his precious nose!)

Thy father's pride and hope!
(He'll break the mirror with that skipping-rope!)
With pure heart newly stamp'd from Nature's mint—
(Where *did* he learn that squint?)
Thou young domestic dove!
(He'll have that jug off, with another shove!)
Dear nurseling of the Hymeneal nest!
(Are those torn clothes his best?)
Little epitome of man!
(He'll climb upon the table, that's his plan!)
Touch'd with the beauteous tints of dawning life—
(He's got a knife!)

Thou enviable being!
No storms, no clouds, in thy blue sky foreseeing,
Play on, play on,
My elfin John!
Toss the light ball—bestride the stick—
(I knew so many cakes would make him sick!)
With fancies, buoyant as the thistle-down,
Prompting the face grotesque, and antic brisk,
With many a lamb-like frisk,
(He's got the scissors, snipping at your gown!)

Thou pretty opening rose!
(Go to your mother, child, and wipe your nose!)
Balmy and breathing music like the South,
(He really brings my heart into my mouth!)
Fresh as the morn, and brilliant as its star,
(I wish that window had an iron bar!)
Bold as the hawk, yet gentle as the dove,—
(I'll tell you what, my love,
I cannot write, unless he's sent above!)

A SERENADE

(*1837?*) [1]

"Lullaby, oh, lullaby!"
Thus I heard a father cry;
"Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
The brat will never shut an eye;
Hither come, some power divine!
Close his lids, or open mine!"

"Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
What the devil makes him cry?
Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
Still he stares—I wonder why,
Why are not the sons of earth
Blind, like puppies, from the birth?"

"Lullaby, oh, lullaby!"
Thus I heard the father cry;
"Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
Mary, you must come and try!—
Hush, oh, hush, for mercy's sake—
The more I sing, the more you wake!"

"Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
Fie, you little creature, fie!
Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
Is no poppy-syrup nigh?
Give him some, or give him all,
I am nodding to his fall!"

"Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
Two such nights, and I shall die!
Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
He'll be bruised, and so shall I,—
How can I from bedposts keep,
When I'm walking in my sleep?

"Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
Sleep his very looks deny—
Lullaby, oh, lullaby;
Nature soon will stupefy—
My nerves relax,—my eyes grow dim—
Who's that fallen—me or him?"

NOVEMBER

(1844)

No sun—no moon!
No morn—no noon—
No dawn—no dusk—no proper time of day—
No sky—no earthly view—
No distance looking blue—
No road—no street—no "t'other side the way"—

1 Published posthumously.

No end to any Row—
No indications where the Crescents go—
No top to any Steeple—
No recognitions of familiar people—
No Courtesies for showing 'em—
No knowing 'em!
No travelling at all—no locomotion,
No inkling of the way—no notion—
"No go"—by land or ocean—
No mail—no post—
No news from any foreign coast—
No park—no ring—no afternoon gentility—
No company—no nobility—
No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,
No comfortable feel in any member—
No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees,
No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds:
November!

WINTHROP MACKWORTH PRAED (1802–1839)

LOVE AT A ROUT

(*1824*–1864)

When some mad bard sits down to muse
About the lilies and the dews,
The grassy vales and sloping lawns,
Fairies and Satyrs, Nymphs and Fawns,
He's apt to think, he's apt to swear,
That Cupid reigns not any where
Except in some sequestered village
Where peasants live on truth and tillage,
That none are fair enough for witches
But maids who frisk through dells and ditches,
That dreams are twice as sweet as dances,
That cities never breed romances,
That Beauty always keeps a cottage,
And Purity grows pale on pottage.

Yes! those dear dreams are all divine;
And those dear dreams have all been mine.
I like the stream, the rock, the bay,
I like the smell of new-mown hay,
I like the babbling of the brooks,
I like the creaking of the crooks,
I like the peaches, and the posies,—
But chiefly, when the season closes,
And often, in the month of fun,
When every poacher cleans his gun,
And cockneys tell enormous lies,
And stocks are pretty sure to rise,
And e'en the Chancellor, they say,
Goes to a point the nearest way,
I hurry from my drowsy desk
To revel in the picturesque,
To hear beneath those ancient trees
The far-off murmur of the bees,
Or trace yon river's mazy channels
With Petrarch, and a brace of spaniels,
Combining foolish rhymes together,
And killing sorrow, and shoe-leather.

Then, as I see some rural maid
Come dancing up the sunny glade,
Coquetting with her fond adorer
Just as her mother did before her,
"Give me," I cry, "the quiet bliss
Of souls like these, of scenes like this;
Where ladies eat and sleep in peace,
Where gallants never heard of Greece,
Where day is day, and night is night,
Where frocks—and morals—both are white;
Blue eyes below—blue skies above—
These are the homes, the hearts, for Love!"

But this is idle; I have been
A sojourner in many a scene,
And picked up wisdom in my way,
And cared not what I had to pay;
Smiling and weeping all the while,
As other people weep and smile;
And I have learnt that Love is not
Confined to any hour or spot;
He lights the smile and fires the frown
Alike in country and in town.
I own fair faces not more fair
In Ettrick, than in Portman Square,
And silly danglers just as silly
In Sherwood, as in Piccadilly.
Soft tones are not the worse, no doubt,
For having harps to help them out;
And smiles are not a ray more bright
By moonbeams, than by candle-light;
I know much magic oft reposes
On wreaths of artificial roses,
And snowy necks,—I never found them
Quite spoilt by having cameos round them.

In short, I'm very sure that all
Who seek or sigh for Beauty's thrall
May breathe their vows, and feed their passion,
Though whist and waltzing keep in fashion,
And make the most delicious sonnets,
In spite of diamonds, and French bonnets!

TO ——

(1864)

I

We met but in one giddy dance,
Good-night joined hands with greeting;
And twenty thousand things may chance
Before our second meeting:
For oh! I have been often told
That all the world grows older,
And hearts and hopes, to-day so cold,
To-morrow must be colder.

II

If I have never touched the string
Beneath your chamber, dear one,
And never said one civil thing
When you were by to hear one,—
If I have made no rhymes about
Those looks which conquer Stoics,
And heard those angel tones, without
One fit of fair heroics,—

III

Yet do not, though the world's cold school
Some bitter truths has taught me,
O do not deem me quite the fool
Which wiser friends have thought me!
There is one charm I still could feel,
If no one laughed at feeling;
One dream my lute could still reveal,—
If it were worth revealing.

IV

But Folly little cares what name
Of friend or foe she handles,
When merriment directs the game,
And midnight dims the candles;
I know that Folly's breath is weak
And would not stir a feather;
But yet I would not have her speak
Your name and mine together.

V

Oh no! this life is dark and bright,
Half rapture and half sorrow;
My heart is very full to-night,
My cup shall be to-morrow;
But they shall never know from me,
On any one condition,
Whose health made bright my Burgundy,
Whose beauty was my vision!

SECOND LOVE

(1844)[1]

How shall he woo her?—Let him stand
Beside her as she sings;
And watch that fine and fairy hand
Flit o'er the quivering strings:
And let him tell her he was heard,
Though sweet the music flow,
A voice whose every whispered word
Was sweeter, long ago.

How shall he woo her?—Let him gaze
In sad and silent trance
On those blue eyes, whose liquid rays
Look love in every glance:
And let him tell her, eyes more bright,
Though bright her own may beam,
Will fling a deeper spell to-night
Upon him in his dream.

How shall he woo her?—Let him try
The charms of olden time,
And swear by earth and sea and sky,
And rave in prose and rhyme:
And let him tell her, when he bent
His knee in other years,
He was not half so eloquent,—
He could not speak for tears!

How shall he woo her?—Let him bow
Before the shrine in prayer;
And bid the priest pronounce the vow
That hallows passion there:
And let him tell her, when she parts
From his unchidden kiss,
That memory to many hearts
Is dearer far than bliss.

Away, away! the chords are mute,
The bond is rent in twain;
You cannot wake that silent lute,
Nor clasp those links again;

1 The first collected edition of Praed's poems appeared posthumously in America in 1844. Many of them were published during his life in periodicals.

Love's toil, I know, is little cost,
  Love's perjury is light sin;
But souls that lose what his hath lost,—
  Oh what have they to win?

THE CHAUNT OF THE BRAZEN HEAD

(1826–1864)

"Brazen companion of my solitary hours! do you, while I recline, pronounce a prologue to those sentiments of wisdom and virtue, which are hereafter to be the oracles of statesmen, and the guides of philosophers. Give me to-night a proem of our essay, an opening of our case, a division of our subject. Speak!"—(*Slow music. The Friar falls asleep. The Head chaunts as follows.*)—THE BRAZEN HEAD.

I think, whatever mortals crave,
  With impotent endeavor,—
A wreath, a rank, a throne, a grave,—
  The world goes round for ever:
I think that life is not too long;
  And therefore I determine,
That many people read a song
  Who will not read a sermon.

I think you've looked through many hearts,
  And mused on many actions,
And studied Man's component parts,
  And Nature's compound fractions:
I think you've picked up truth by bits
  From foreigner and neighbor;
I think the world has lost its wits,
  And you have lost your labor.

I think the studies of the wise,
  The hero's noisy quarrel,
The majesty of Woman's eyes,
  The poet's cherished laurel,
And all that makes us lean or fat,
  And all that charms or troubles,—
This bubble is more bright than that,
  But still they all are bubbles.

I think the thing you call Renown,
  The unsubstantial vapor
For which the soldier burns a town,
  The sonnetteer a taper,
Is like the mist which, as he flies,
  The horseman leaves behind him;
He cannot mark its wreaths arise,
  Or if he does they blind him.

I think one nod of Mistress Chance
  Makes creditors of debtors,
And shifts the funeral for the dance,
  The sceptre for the fetters:
I think that Fortune's favored guest
  May live to gnaw the platters,
And he that wears the purple vest
  May wear the rags and tatters.

I think the Tories love to buy
  "Your Lordship's" and "your Grace's,"
By loathing common honesty,
  And lauding commonplaces:
I think that some are very wise,
  And some are very funny,
And some grow rich by telling lies,
  And some by telling money.

I think the Whigs are wicked knaves—
  (And very like the Tories)—
Who doubt that Britain rules the waves,
  And ask the price of glories:
I think that many fret and fume
  At what their friends are planning,
And Mr. Hume hates Mr. Brougham
  As much as Mr. Canning.

I think that friars and their hoods,
  Their doctrines and their maggots,
Have lighted up too many feuds,
  And far too many faggots:
I think, while zealots fast and frown,
  And fight for two or seven,
That there are fifty roads to Town,
  And rather more to Heaven.

I think that, thanks to Paget's lance,
  And thanks to Chester's learning,
The hearts that burned for fame in France
  At home are safe from burning:
I think the Pope is on his back;
  And, though 'tis fun to shake him,
I think the Devil not so black
  As many people make him.

I think that Love is like a play,
  Where tears and smiles are blended,
Or like a faithless April day,
  Whose shine with shower is ended:
Like Colnbrook pavement, rather rough,
  Like trade, exposed to losses,
And like a Highland plaid,—all stuff,
  And very full of crosses.

I think the world, though dark it be,
  Has aye one rapturous pleasure
Concealed in life's monotony,
  For those who seek the treasure;

One planet in a starless night,
  One blossom on a briar,
One friend not quite a hypocrite,
  One woman not a liar!

I think poor beggars court St. Giles,
  Rich beggars court St. Stephen;
And Death looks down with nods and smiles,
  And makes the odds all even:
I think some die upon the field,
  And some upon the billow,
And some are laid beneath a shield,
  And some beneath a willow.

I think that very few have sighed
  When Fate at last has found them,
Though bitter foes were by their side,
  And barren moss around them:
I think that some have died of drought,
  And some have died of drinking;
I think that nought is worth a thought,—
  And I'm a fool for thinking!

THE VICAR

(*1829*–1844)

Some years ago, ere time and taste
  Had turned our parish topsy-turvy,
When Darnel Park was Darnel Waste,
  And roads as little known as scurvy,
The man who lost his way, between
  St. Mary's Hill and Sandy Thicket,
Was always shown across the green,
  And guided to the Parson's wicket.

Back flew the bolt of lissom lath;
  Fair Margaret, in her tidy kirtle,
Led the lorn traveller up the path,
  Though clean-clipt rows of box and myrtle;
And Don and Sancho, Tramp and Tray,
  Upon the parlor steps collected,
Wagged all their tails, and seemed to say—
  "Our master knows you—you're expected."

Uprose the Reverend Dr. Brown,
  Uprose the Doctor's winsome marrow;
The lady laid her knitting down,
  Her husband clasped his ponderous Barrow;
Whate'er the stranger's caste or creed,
  Pundit or Papist, saint or sinner,
He found a stable for his steed,
  And welcome for himself, and dinner.

If, when he reached his journey's end,
  And warmed himself in Court or College,
He had not gained an honest friend
  And twenty curious scraps of knowledge,—
If he departed as he came,
  With no new light on love or liquor,—
Good sooth, the traveller was to blame,
  And not the Vicarage, nor the Vicar.

His talk was like a stream, which runs
  With rapid change from rocks to roses:
It slipped from politics to puns,
  It passed from Mahomet to Moses;
Beginning with the laws which keep
  The planets in their radiant courses,
And ending with some precept deep
  For dressing eels, or shoeing horses.

He was a shrewd and sound Divine,
  Of loud Dissent the mortal terror;
And when by dint of page and line,
  He 'stablished Truth, or startled Error,
The Baptist found him far too deep;
  The Deist sighed with saving sorrow;
And the lean Levite went to sleep,
  And dreamed of tasting pork to-morrow.

His sermon never said or showed
  That Earth is foul, that Heaven is gracious,
Without refreshment on the road
  From Jerome, or from Athanasius:
And sure a righteous zeal inspired
  The hand and head that penned and planned them,
For all who understood admired,
  And some who did not understand them.

He wrote, too, in a quiet way,
  Small treatises, and smaller verses,
And sage remarks on chalk and clay,
  And hints to noble Lords—and nurses;
True histories of last year's ghost,
  Lines to a ringlet, or a turban,
And trifles for the Morning Post,
  And nothings for Sylvanus Urban.

He did not think all mischief fair,
  Although he had a knack of joking;
He did not make himself a bear,
  Although he had a taste for smoking;
And when religious sects ran mad,
  He held, in spite of all his learning,

That if a man's belief is bad,
It will not be improved by burning.

And he was kind, and loved to sit
In the low hut or garnished cottage,
And praise the farmer's homely wit,
And share the widow's homelier pottage:
At his approach complaint grew mild;
And when his hand unbarred the shutter,
The clammy lips of fever smiled
The welcome which they could not utter.

He always had a tale for me
Of Julius Cæsar, or of Venus;
From him I learnt the rule of three,
Cat's cradle, leap-frog, and *Quae genus:*
I used to singe his powdered wig,
To steal the staff he put such trust in,
And make the puppy dance a jig,
When he began to quote Augustine.

Alack the change! in vain I look
For haunts in which my boyhood trifled,—
The level lawn, the trickling brook,
The trees I climbed, the beds I rifled:
The church is larger than before;
You reach it by a carriage entry;
It holds three hundred people more,
And pews are fitted up for gentry.

Sit in the Vicar's seat: you'll hear
The doctrine of a gentle Johnian,
Whose hand is white, whose tone is clear,
Whose phrase is very Ciceronian.
Where is the old man laid?—Look down,
And construe on the slab before you,
"Hic jacet GVLIELMVS BROWN,
Vir nullâ non donandus lauru."

QUINCE

(*1829*–1844)

Fallentis semita vitae.—Hor.

Near a small village in the West,
Where many very worthy people
Eat, drink, play whist, and do their best
To guard from evil Church and steeple
There stood—alas! it stands no more!—
A tenement of brick and plaster,
Of which, for forty years and four,
My good friend Quince was lord and master.

Welcome was he in hut and hall
To maids and matrons, peers and peasants;
He won the sympathies of all
By making puns, and making presents.
Though all the parish were at strife,
He kept his counsel, and his carriage,
And laughed, and loved a quiet life,
And shrank from Chancery suits—and marriage.

Sound was his claret—and his head;
Warm was his double ale—and feelings;
His partners at the whist club said
That he was faultless in his dealings:
He went to church but once a week;
Yet Dr. Poundtext always found him
An upright man, who studied Greek,
And liked to see his friends around him.

Asylums, hospitals and schools,
He used to swear, were made to cozen;
All who subscribed to them were fools,—
And he subscribed to half-a-dozen:
It was his doctrine, that the poor
Were always able, never willing;
And so the beggar at his door
Had first abuse, and then—a shilling.

Some public principles he had,
But was no flatterer, nor fretter;
He rapped his box when things were bad,
And said "I cannot make them better!"
And much he loathed the patriot's snort,
And much he scorned the placeman's snuffle;
And cut the fiercest quarrels short
With—"Patience, gentlemen—and shuffle!"

For full ten years his pointer Speed
Had couched beneath her master's table;
For twice ten years his old white steed
Had fattened in his master's stable;
Old Quince averred, upon his troth,
They were the ugliest beasts in Devon;
And none knew why he fed them both,
With his own hands, six days in seven.

Whene'er they heard his ring or knock,
Quicker than thought, the village slatterns
Flung down the novel, smoothed the frock,
And took up Mrs. Glasse, and patterns;
Adine was studying baker's bills;
Louisa looked the queen of knitters;
Jane happened to be hemming frills;

And Bell, by chance, was making fritters.

But all was vain; and while decay
Came, like a tranquil moonlight o'er him,
And found him gouty still, and gay,
With no fair nurse to bless or bore him,
His rugged smile and easy chair,
His dread of matrimonial lectures,
His wig, his stick, his powdered hair,
Were themes for very strange conjectures.

Some sages thought the stars above
Had crazed him with excess of knowledge;
Some heard he had been crossed in love
Before he came away from College;
Some darkly hinted that his Grace
Did nothing, great or small, without him;
Some whispered, with a solemn face,
That there was "something odd about him!"

I found him, at threescore and ten,
A single man, but bent quite double;
Sickness was coming on him then
To take him from a world of trouble:
He prosed of slipping down the hill,
Discovered he grew older daily;
One frosty day he made his will,—
The next, he sent for Doctor Bailey.

And so he lived,—and so he died! —
When last I sat beside his pillow
He shook my hand, and "Ah!" he cried,
"Penelope must wear the willow.
Tell her I hugged her rosy chain
While life was flickering in the socket;
And say, that when I call again,
I'll bring a license in my pocket.

"I've left my house and grounds to Fag,—
I hope his master's shoes will suit him;
And I've bequeathed to you my nag,
To feed him for my sake,—or shoot him.
The Vicar's wife will take old Fox,—
She'll find him an uncommon mouser,—
And let her husband have my box,
My Bible, and my Assmanshauser.

"Whether I ought to die or not,
My doctors cannot quite determine;
It's only clear that I shall rot,
And be, like Priam, food for vermin.
My debts are paid:—but Nature's debt
Almost escaped my recollection:
Tom!—we shall meet again;—and yet
I cannot leave you my direction!"

THE BELLE OF THE BALL-ROOM

(*1830–1844*)

Il faut juger des femmes depuis la-chassure jusqu'à la coiffure exclusivement, à peu près comme on mesure le poisson entre queue et tête.—La Bruyère.

Years—years ago,—ere yet my dreams
Had been of being wise or witty,—
Ere I had done with writing themes,
Or yawned o'er this infernal Chitty;—
Years—years ago,—while all my joy
Was in my fowling-piece and filly,—
In short, while I was yet a boy,
I fell in love with Laura Lily.

I saw her at the County Ball:
There, when the sounds of flute and fiddle
Gave signal sweet in that old hall
Of hands across and down the middle,
Hers was the subtlest spell by far
Of all that set young hearts romancing;
She was our queen, our rose, our star;
And then she danced—O Heaven, her dancing!

Dark was her hair, her hand was white;
Her voice was exquisitely tender;
Her eyes were full of liquid light;
I never saw a waist so slender!
Her every look, her every smile,
Shot right and left a score of arrows;
I thought 'twas Venus from her isle,
And wondered where she'd left her sparrows.

She talked,—of politics or prayers,—
Of Southey's prose or Wordsworth's sonnets, —
Of danglers—or of dancing bears,
Of battles—or the last new bonnets;
By candlelight, at twelve o'clock,
To me it mattered not a tittle;
If those bright lips had quoted Locke,
I might have thought they murmured Little.

Through sunny May, through sultry June,
I loved her with a love eternal;

I spoke her praises to the moon,
I wrote them to the Sunday Journal:
My mother laughed; I soon found out
That ancient ladies have no feeling:
My father frowned; but how should gout
See any happiness in kneeling?

She was the daughter of a Dean,
Rich, fat, and rather apoplectic;
She had one brother, just thirteen,
Whose color was extremely hectic;
Her grandmother for many a year
Had fed the parish with her bounty;
Her second cousin was a peer,
And Lord Lieutenant of the County.

But titles, and the three per cents.,
And mortgages, and great relations,
And India bonds, and tithes, and rents,
Oh what are they to love's sensations?
Black eyes, fair forehead, clustering locks—
Such wealth, such honors, Cupid chooses;
He cares as little for the Stocks,
As Baron Rothschild for the Muses.

She sketched; the vale, the wood, the beach,
Grew lovelier from her pencil's shading:
She botanized; I envied each
Young blossom in her boudoir fading:
She warbled Handel; it was grand;
She made the Catalani jealous:
She touched the organ; I could stand
For hours and hours to blow the bellows.

She kept an album, too, at home,
Well filled with all an album's glories;
Paintings of butterflies, and Rome,
Patterns for trimmings, Persian stories;
Soft songs to Julia's cockatoo,
Fierce odes to Famine and to Slaughter,
And autographs of Prince Leboo,
And recipes for elder-water.

And she was flattered, worshipped, bored;
Her steps were watched, her dress was noted;
Her poodle dog was quite adored,
Her sayings were extremely quoted;
She laughed, and every heart was glad,
As if the taxes were abolished;
She frowned, and every look was sad,
As if the Opera were demolished.

She smiled on many, just for fun,—
I knew that there was nothing in it:
I was the first—the only one
Her heart had thought of for a minute.—
I knew it, for she told me so,
In phrase which was divinely moulded;
She wrote a charming hand,—and oh!
How sweetly all her notes were folded!

Our love was like most other loves;—
A little glow, a little shiver,
A rose-bud, and a pair of gloves,
And "Fly not yet"—upon the river;
Some jealousy of some one's heir,
Some hopes of dying broken-hearted,
A miniature, a lock of hair,
The usual vows,—and then we parted.

We parted; months and years rolled by;
We met again four summers after;
Our parting was all sob and sigh;
Our meeting was all mirth and laughter;
For in my heart's most secret cell
There had been many other lodgers;
And she was not the ball-room's Belle,
But only—Mrs. Something Rogers!

A LETTER OF ADVICE

FROM MISS MEDORA TREVILIAN, AT PADUA, TO MISS ARAMINTA VAVASOUR, IN LONDON

(*1828*–1844)

Enfin, monsieur, un homme aimable;
Voilà pourquoi je ne saurais l'aimer.—SCRIBE.

You tell me you're promised a lover,
My own Araminta, next week;
Why cannot my fancy discover
The hue of his coat and his cheek?
Alas! if he look like another,
A vicar, a banker, a beau,
Be deaf to your father and mother,
My own Araminta, say "No!"

Miss Lane, at her Temple of Fashion,
Taught us both how to sing and to speak,
And we loved one another with passion,
Before we had been there a week:
You gave me a ring for a token;
I wear it wherever I go;
I gave you a chain,—is it broken?
My own Araminta, say "No!"

O think of our favorite cottage,
And think of our dear Lalla Rookh!

How we shared with the milkmaids their pottage,
And drank of the stream from the brook;
How fondly our loving lips faltered
"What further can grandeur bestow?"
My heart is the same;—is yours altered?
My own Araminta, say "No!"

Remember the thrilling romances
We read on the bank in the glen;
Remember the suitors our fancies
Would picture for both of us then.
They wore the red cross on their shoulder,
They had vanquished and pardoned their foe—
Sweet friend, are you wiser or colder?
My own Araminta, say "No!"

You know, when Lord Rigmarole's carriage
Drove off with your cousin Justine,
You wept, dearest girl, at the marriage,
And whispered, "How base she has been!"
You said you were sure it would kill you,
If ever your husband looked so;
And you will not apostatize,—will you?
My own Araminta, say "No!"

When I heard I was going abroad, love,
I thought I was going to die;
We walked arm in arm to the road, love,
We looked arm in arm to the sky;
And I said "When a foreign postilion
Has hurried me off to the Po,
Forget not Medora Trevilian;
My own Araminta, say 'No!'"

We parted! but sympathy's fetters
Reach far over valley and hill;
I muse o'er your exquisite letters,
And feel that your heart is mine still;
And he who would share it with me, love,—
The richest of treasures below,—
If he's not what Orlando should be, love,
My own Araminta, say "No!"

If he wears a top-boot in his wooing,
If he comes to you riding a cob,
If he talks of his baking or brewing,
If he puts up his feet on the hob,
If he ever drinks port after dinner,
If his brow or his breeding is low,
If he calls himself "Thompson" or "Skinner,"
My own Araminta, say "No!"

If he studies the news in the papers
While you are preparing the tea,
If he talks of the damps or the vapors
While moonlight lies soft on the sea,
If he's sleepy while you are capricious,
If he has not a musical "Oh!"
If he does not call Werther delicious,—
My own Araminta, say "No!"

If he ever sets foot in the City
Among the stockbrokers and Jews,
If he has not a heart full of pity,
If he don't stand six feet in his shoes,
If his lips are not redder than roses,
If his hands are not whiter than snow,
If he has not the model of noses,—
My own Araminta, say "No!"

If he speaks of a tax or a duty,
If he does not look grand on his knees,
If he's blind to a landscape of beauty,
Hills, valleys, rocks, waters, and trees,
If he dotes not on desolate towers,
If he likes not to hear the blast blow,
If he knows not the language of flowers,—
My own Araminta, say "No!"

He must walk—like a god of old story
Come down from the home of his rest;
He must smile—like the sun in his glory
On the buds he loves ever the best;
And oh! from its ivory portal
Like music his soft speech must flow!—
If he speak, smile, or walk like a mortal,
My own Araminta, say "No!"

Don't listen to tales of his bounty,
Don't hear what they say of his birth,
Don't look at his seat in the county,
Don't calculate what he is worth;
But give him a theme to write verse on,
And see if he turns out his toe;
If he's only an excellent person,—
My own Araminta, say "No!"

OUR BALL

(*1829*–1844)

Comment! c'est lui? que je le regarde encore! C'est que vraiment il est bien changé; n'est-ce pas, mon papa?—Les Premiers Amours.]

You'll come to our Ball;—since we parted,
I've thought of you more than I'll say;

Indeed, I was half broken-hearted
For a week, when they took you away.
Fond fancy brought back to my slumbers
Our walks on the Ness and the Den,
And echoed the musical numbers
Which you used to sing to me then.
I know the romance, since it's over,
'Twere idle, or worse, to recall;
I know you're a terrible rover;
But Clarence, you'll come to our Ball!

It's only a year, since, at College,
You put on your cap and your gown;
But, Clarence, you're grown out of knowledge,
And changed from the spur to the crown:
The voice that was best when it faltered
Is fuller and firmer in tone,
And the smile that should never have altered—
Dear Clarence—it is not your own:
Your cravat was badly selected;
Your coat don't become you at all;
And why is your hair so neglected?
You must have it curled for our Ball.

I've often been out upon Haldon
To look for a covey with pup;
I've often been over to Shaldon,
To see how your boat is laid up:
In spite of the terrors of Aunty,
I've ridden the filly you broke;
And I've studied your sweet little Dante
In the shade of your favorite oak;
When I sat in July to Sir Lawrence,
I sat in your love of a shawl;
And I'll wear what you brought me from Florence,
Perhaps, if you'll come to our Ball.

You'll find us all changed since you vanished;
We've set up a National School;
And waltzing is utterly banished,
And Ellen has married a fool;
The Major is going to travel,
Miss Hyacinth threatens a rout,
The walk is laid down with fresh gravel,
Papa is laid up with the gout;
And Jane has gone on with her easels,
And Anne has gone off with Sir Paul;
And Fanny is sick with the measles,—
And I'll tell you the rest at the Ball.

You'll meet all your Beauties; the Lily,
And the Fairy of Willowbrook Farm,
And Lucy, who made me so silly
At Dawlish, by taking your arm;
Miss Manners, who always abused you
For talking so much about Hock,
And her sister, who often amused you
By raving of rebels and Rock,
And something which surely would answer,
An heiress quite fresh from Bengal;
So, though you were seldom a dancer,
You'll dance, just for once, at our Ball.

But out on the World! from the flowers
It shuts out the sunshine of truth:
It blights the green leaves in the bowers,
It makes an old age of our youth;
And the flow of our feeling, once in it,
Like a streamlet beginning to freeze,
Though it cannot turn ice in a minute,
Grows harder by sudden degrees:
Time treads o'er the graves of affection;
Sweet honey is turned into gall;
Perhaps you have no recollection
That ever you danced at our Ball!

You once could be pleased with our ballads,—
To-day you have critical ears;
You once could be charmed with our salads—
Alas! you've been dining with Peers;
You trifled and flirted with many,—
You've forgotten the when and the how;
There was one you liked better than any,—
Perhaps you've forgotten her now.
But of those you remember most newly,
Of those who delight or enthrall,
None love you a quarter so truly
As some you will find at our Ball.

They tell me you've many who flatter,
Because of your wit and your song:
They tell me—and what does it matter?—
You like to be praised by the throng:
They tell me you're shadowed with laurel:
They tell me you're loved by a Blue:
They tell me you're sadly immoral—
Dear Clarence, that cannot be true!
But to me, you are still what I found you,
Before you grew clever and tall;
And you'll think of the spell that once bound you;
And you'll come—won't you come?—to our Ball!

PALINODIA

(*1826*-1844)

Nec meus hic sermo est, sed quem praecepit.—HORACE.

There was a time, when I could feel
All passion's hopes and fears;
And tell what tongues can ne'er reveal
By smiles, and sighs, and tears.
The days are gone! no more—no more
The cruel Fates allow;
And, though I'm hardly twenty-four,—
I'm not a lover now.
Lady, the mist is on my sight,
The chill is on my brow;
My day is night, my bloom is blight;
I'm not a lover now!

I never talk about the clouds,
I laugh at girls and boys,
I'm growing rather fond of crowds,
And very fond of noise;
I never wander forth alone
Upon the mountain's brow;
I weighed, last winter, sixteen stone;—
I'm not a lover now!

I never wish to raise a veil,
I never raise a sigh,
I never tell a tender tale,
I never tell a lie:
I cannot kneel, as once I did;
I've quite forgot my bow;
I never do as I am bid;—
I'm not a lover now!

I make strange blunders every day,
If I would be gallant;
Take smiles for wrinkles, black for grey,
And nieces for their aunt:
I fly from folly, though it flows
From lips of loveliest glow;
I don't object to length of nose;—
I'm not a lover now!

I find my Ovid very dry,
My Petrarch quite a pill,
Cut fancy for Philosophy,
Tom Moore for Mr. Mill.
And belles may read, and beaux may write,—
I care not who or how;
I burnt my Album, Sunday night:—
I'm not a lover now!

I don't encourage idle dreams
Of poison or of ropes:
I cannot dine on airy schemes;
I cannot sup on hopes:
New milk, I own, is very fine,
Just foaming from the cow;
But yet, I want my pint of wine;—
I'm not a lover now!

When Laura sings young hearts away,
I'm deafer than the deep;
When Leonora goes to play,
I sometimes go to sleep;
When Mary draws her white gloves out,
I never dance, I vow,—
"Too hot to kick one's heels about!"
I'm not a lover now!

I'm busy, now, with state affairs;
I prate of Pitt and Fox;
I ask the price of rail-road shares,
I watch the turns of stocks.
And this is life! no verdure blooms
Upon the withered bough:
I save a fortune in perfumes;—
I'm not a lover now!

I may be yet, what others are,
A boudoir's babbling fool,
The flattered star of Bench or Bar,
A party's chief, or tool:—
Come shower or sunshine, hope or fear,
The palace or the plough,—
My heart and lute are broken here;
I'm not a lover now!
Lady, the mist is on my sight,
The chill is on my brow;
My day is night, my bloom is blight;
I'm not a lover now!

ONE MORE QUADRILLE

(*1832*–1844)

Not yet, not yet; it's hardly four;
Not yet; we'll send the chair away;
Mirth still has many smiles in store,
And love has fifty things to say.
Long leagues the weary Sun must drive,
Ere pant his hot steeds o'er the hill;
The merry stars will dance till five;
One more quadrille,—one more quadrille!

'Tis only thus, 'tis only here
That maids and minstrels may forget
The myriad ills they feel or fear,
Ennui, taxation, cholera, debt;
With daylight busy cares and schemes
Will come again to chafe or chill;
This is the fairy land of dreams;
One more quadrille,—one more quadrille!

What tricks the French in Paris play,
And what the Austrians are about,

And whether that tall knave, Lord Grey,
Is staying in, or going out;
And what the House of Lords will do,
At last, with that eternal Bill,
I do not care a rush,—do you?
One more quadrille,—one more quadrille!

My book don't sell, my play don't draw,
My garden gives me only weeds;
And Mr. Quirk has found a flaw—
Deuce take him—in my title-deeds;
My Aunt has scratched her nephew's name
From that sweet corner in her will;
My dog is dead, my horse is lame;
One more quadrille,—one more quadrille!

Not yet, not yet; it is not late;
Don't whisper it to sister Jane;
Your brother, I am sure, will wait;
Papa will go to cards again.
Not yet, not yet. Your eyes are bright,
Your step is like a wood-nymph's, still.
Oh no, you can't be tired, to-night!
One more quadrille,—one more quadrille!

JOHN KEBLE (1792–1866)

From *THE CHRISTIAN YEAR*

(1827)

MORNING

His compassions fail not. They are new every morning.

Lament. iii. 22, 23.

Hues of the rich unfolding morn,
That, ere the glorious sun be born,
By some soft touch invisible
Around his path are taught to swell;—

Thou rustling breeze so fresh and gay,
That dancest forth at opening day,
And brushing by with joyous wing,
Wakenest each little leaf to sing;—

Ye fragrant clouds of dewy stream,
By which deep grove and tangled stream
Pay, for soft rains in season given,
Their tribute to the genial heaven;—

Why waste your treasures ot delight
Upon our thankless, joyless sight;
Who day by day to sin awake,
Seldom of Heaven and you partake?

Oh! timely happy, timely wise,
Hearts that with rising morn arise!
Eyes that the beam celestial view,
Which evermore makes all things new!

New every morning is the love
Our wakening and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought.

New mercies, each returning day,
Hover around us while we pray;
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of Heaven.

If on our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,
As more of Heaven in each we see:
Some softening gleam of love and prayer
Shall dawn on every cross and care.

As for some dear familiar strain
Untir'd we ask, and ask again,
Ever, in its melodious store,
Finding a spell unheard before;

Such is the bliss of souls serene,
When they have sworn, and stedfast mean,
Counting the cost, in all t' espy
Their God, in all themselves deny.

O could we learn that sacrifice,
What lights would all around us rise!
How would our hearts with wisdom talk
Along Life's dullest dreariest walk!

We need not bid, for cloister'd cell,
Our neighbor and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky:

The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves; a road
To bring us, daily, nearer God.

Seek we no more; content with these,
Let present Rapture, Comfort, Ease,
As Heaven shall bid them, come and go:—
The secret this of Rest below.

Only, O Lord, in Thy dear love
Fit us for perfect Rest above;
And help us, this and every day,
To live more nearly as we pray.

ADVENT SUNDAY

Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. *Romans* xiii. 11.

Awake—again the Gospel-trump is blown—
From year to year it swells with louder tone,
From year to year the signs of wrath
Are gathering round the Judge's path,
Strange words fulfill'd, and mighty works achiev'd,
And truth in all the world both hated and believ'd.

Awake! why linger in the gorgeous town,
Sworn liegemen of the Cross and thorny crown?
Up from your beds of sloth for shame,
Speed to the eastern mount like flame,
Nor wonder, should ye find your King in tears,
Even with the loud Hosanna ringing in His ears.

Alas! no need to rouse them: long ago
They are gone forth to swell Messiah's show:
With glittering robes and garlands sweet
They strew the ground beneath His feet:
All but your hearts are there—O doom'd to prove
The arrows wing'd in Heaven for Faith that will not love!

Meanwhile He paces through th' adoring crowd,
Calm as the march of some majestic cloud,
That o'er wild scenes of ocean-war
Holds its still course in Heaven afar:
Even so, heart-searching Lord, as years roll on.
Thou keepest silent watch from Thy triumphal throne:

Even so, the world is thronging round to gaze
On the dread vision of the latter days,
Constrain'd to own Thee, but in heart
Prepar'd to take Barabbas' part:
"Hosanna" now, to-morrow "Crucify,"
The changeful burden still of their rude lawless cry.

Yet in that throng of selfish hearts untrue
Thy sad eye rests upon Thy faithful few,
Children and childlike souls are there,
Blind Bartimeus' humble prayer,
And Lazarus waken'd from his four days' sleep,
Enduring life again, that Passover to keep.

And fast beside the olive-border'd way
Stands the bless'd home, where Jesus deign'd to stay,
The peaceful home, to Zeal sincere
And heavenly Contemplation dear,
Where Martha lov'd to wait with reverence meet,
And wiser Mary linger'd at Thy sacred feet.

Still through decaying ages as they glide,
Thou lov'st Thy chosen remnant to divide;
Sprinkled along the waste of years
Full many a soft green isle appears:
Pause where we may upon the desert road,
Some shelter is in sight, some sacred safe abode.

When withering blasts of error swept the sky,[1]
And Love's last flower seem'd fain to droop and die,
How sweet, how lone the ray benign
On shelter'd nooks of Palestine!
Then to his early home did Love repair,
And cheer'd his sickening heart with his own native air.

Years roll away: again the tide of crime
Has swept Thy footsteps from the favor'd clime.

1 Arianism in the fourth century.

Where shall the holy Cross find rest?
On a crown'd monarch's[1] mailèd breast:
Like some bright angel o'er the darkling scene,
Through court and camp he holds his heavenward course serene.

A fouler vision yet; an age of light,
Light without love, glares on the aching sight:
O who can tell how calm and sweet,
Meek Walton! shews thy green retreat,
When wearied with the tale thy times disclose,
The eye first finds thee out in thy secure repose?

Thus bad and good their several warnings give
Of His approach, whom none may see and live:
Faith's ear, with awful still delight,
Counts them like minute bells at night,
Keeping the heart awake till dawn of morn,
While to her funeral pile this aged world is borne.

But what are Heaven's alarms to hearts that cower
In wilful slumber, deepening every hour,
That draw their curtains closer round,
The nearer swells the trumpet's sound?
Lord, ere our trembling lamps sink down and die,
Touch us with chastening hand, and make us feel Thee nigh.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. 1 *St. John* iii. 13, 14.

The clouds that wrap the setting sun
When Autumn's softest gleams are ending,
Where all bright hues together run
In sweet confusion blending:—
Why, as we watch their floating wreath,
Seem they the breath of life to breathe?

To Fancy's eye their motions prove
They mantle round the Sun for love.

When up some woodland dale we catch
The many-twinkling smile of ocean,
Or with pleas'd ear bewilder'd watch
His chime of restless motion;
Still as the surging waves retire
They seem to gasp with strong desire.
Such signs of love old Ocean gives,
We cannot choose but think he lives.

Wouldst thou the life of souls discern?
Nor human wisdom nor divine
Helps thee by aught beside to learn;
Love is life's only sign.
The spring of the regenerate heart,
The pulse, the glow of every part,
Is the true love of Christ our Lord,
As man embrac'd, as God ador'd.

But he, whose heart will bound to mark
The full bright burst of summer morn,
Loves too each little dewy spark,
By leaf or flow'ret worn:
Cheap forms, and common hues, 'tis true,
Through the bright shower-drop meet his view;
The coloring may be of this earth;
The lustre comes of heavenly birth.

Even so, who loves the Lord aright,
No soul of man can worthless find;
All will be precious in his sight,
Since Christ on all hath shin'd:
But chiefly Christian souls; for they,
Though worn and soil'd with sinful clay,
Are yet, to eyes that see them true,
All glistening with baptismal dew.

Then marvel not, if such as bask
In purest light of innocence,
Hope against hope, in love's dear task,
Spite of all dark offense.
If they who hate the trespass most,
Yet, when all other love is lost,
Love the poor sinner, marvel not;
Christ's mark outwears the rankest blot.

No distance breaks the tie of blood;
Brothers are brothers evermore;
Nor wrong, nor wrath of deadliest mood,
That magic may o'erpower;
Oft, ere the common source be known,
The kindred drops will claim their own,
And throbbing pulses silently
Move heart towards heart by sympathy.

1 St. Louis in the thirteenth century.

So is it with true Christian hearts;
Their mutual share in Jesus' blood
An everlasting bond imparts
Of holiest brotherhood:
Oh! might we all our lineage prove,
Give and forgive, do good and love,
By soft endearments in kind strife
Lightening the load of daily life!

There is much need; for not as yet
Are we in shelter or repose,
The holy house is still beset
With leaguer of stern foes;
Wild thoughts within, bad men without,
All evil spirits round about,
Are banded in unblest device,
To spoil Love's earthly paradise.

Then draw we nearer day by day,
Each to his brethren, all to God;
Let the world take us as she may,
We must not change our road;
Not wondering, though in grief, to find
The martyr's foe still keep her mind;
But fix'd to hold Love's banner fast,
And by submission win at last.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.
Philippians iii. 21.

Red o'er the forest peers the setting sun,
The line of yellow light dies fast away
That crown'd the eastern copse: and chill and dun
Falls on the moor the brief November day.

Now the tir'd hunter winds a parting note,
And Echo bids good-night from every glade;
Yet wait awhile, and see the calm leaves float
Each to his rest beneath their parent shade.

How like decaying life they seem to glide!
And yet no second spring have they in store,
But where they fall, forgotten to abide
Is all their portion, and they ask no more.

Soon o'er their heads blithe April airs shall sing,
A thousand wild-flowers round them shall unfold,
The green buds glisten in the dews of Spring,
And all be vernal rapture as of old.

Unconscious they in waste oblivion lie,
In all the world of busy life around
No thought of them; in all the bounteous sky
No drop, for them, of kindly influence found.

Man's portion is to die and rise again—
Yet he complains, while these unmurmuring part
With their sweet lives, as pure from sin and stain,
As his when Eden held his virgin heart.

And haply half unblam'd his murmuring voice
Might sound in Heaven, were all his second life
Only the first renew'd—the heathen's choice,
A round of listless joy and weary strife.

For dreary were this earth, if earth were all,
Tho' brighten'd oft by dear Affection's kiss;—
Who for the spangles wears the funeral pall?
But catch a gleam beyond it, and 'tis bliss.

Heavy and dull this frame of limbs and heart,
Whether slow creeping on cold earth, or borne
On lofty steed, or loftier prow, we dart
O'er wave or field: yet breezes laugh to scorn

Our puny speed, and birds, and clouds in heaven,
And fish, like living shafts that pierce the main,
And stars that shoot through freezing air at even—
Who but would follow, might he break his chain?

And thou shalt break it soon; the grovelling worm

Shall find his wings, and soar as fast and free
As his transfigur'd Lord with lightning form
And snowy vest—such grace He won for thee,

When from the grave He sprung at dawn of morn,
And led through boundless air thy conquering road
Leaving a glorious track, where saints, new-born,
Might fearless follow to their blest abode.

But first, by many a stern and fiery blast
The world's rude furnace must thy blood refine,
And many a gale of keenest woe be pass'd,
Till every pulse beat true to airs divine.

Till every limb obey the mounting soul,
The mounting soul, the call by Jesus given.
He who the stormy heart can so control,
The laggard body soon will waft to Heaven.

ST. MATTHEW

And after these things we went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him. *St. Luke* v. 27, 28.

Ye hermits blest, ye holy maids,
The nearest Heaven on earth,
Who talk with God in shadowy glades,
Free from rude care and mirth;
To whom some viewless teacher brings
The secret lore of rural things,
The moral of each fleeting cloud and gale,
The whispers from above, that haunt the twilight vale:

Say, when in pity ye have gaz'd
On the wreath'd smoke afar,
That o'er some town, like mist up-rais'd,
Hung hiding sun and star,
Then as ye turn'd your weary eye
To the green earth and open sky,
Were ye not fain to doubt how Faith could dwell
Amid that dreary glare, in this world's citadel?

But Love's a flower that will not die
For lack of leafy screen,
And Christian Hope can cheer the eye
That ne'er saw vernal green;
Then be ye sure that Love can bless
Even in this crowded loneliness,
Where ever-moving myriads seem to say,
Go—thou art nought to us, nor we to thee —away!

There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th' everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.

How sweet to them, in such brief rest
As thronging cares afford,
In thought to wander, fancy-blest,
To where their gracious Lord,
In vain, to win proud Pharisees,
Spake, and was heard by fell disease[1]—
But not in vain, beside yon breezy lake,
Bade the meek Publican his gainful seat forsake:

At once he rose, and left his gold;
His treasure and his heart
Transferr'd, where he shall safe behold
Earth and her idols part;
While he beside his endless store
Shall sit, and floods unceasing pour
Of Christ's true riches o'er all time and space,
First angel of His Church, first steward of His Grace.

Nor can ye not delight to think[2]
Where He vouchsaf'd to eat,
How the Most Holy did not shrink

1 It seems from St. Matthew ix. 8, 9, that the calling of Levi took place immediately after the healing of the paralytic in the presence of the Pharisees.

2 St. Matthew ix, 10.

From touch of sinner's meat;
What worldly hearts and hearts impure
Went with Him through the rich man's door,
That we might learn of Him lost souls to love,
And view His least and worst with hope to meet above.

These gracious lines shed Gospel light
On Mammon's gloomiest cells,
As on some city's cheerless night
The tide of sunrise swells,
Till tower, and dome, and bridge-way proud
Are mantled with a golden cloud,
And to wise hearts this certain hope is given;
"No mist that man may raise, shall hide the eye of Heaven."

And oh! if even on Babel shine
Such gleams of Paradise,
Should not their peace be peace divine,
Who day by day arise
To look on clearer heavens, and scan
The work of God untouch'd by man?
Shame on us, who about us Babel bear,
And live in Paradise, as if God was not there!

ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? *Hebrews* i. 14.

Ye stars that round the Sun of righteousness
In glorious order roll,
With harps for ever strung, ready to bless
God for each rescued soul,
Ye eager spirits, that build in light divine,
Oh! think of us to-day,
Faint warblers of this earth, that would combine
Our trembling notes with your accepted lay.

Your amarant wreaths were earn'd; and homeward all,
Flush'd with victorious might,
Ye might have sped to keep high festival,
And revel in the light;
But meeting us, weak worldlings, on our way,
Tired ere the fight begun,
Ye turn'd to help us in th' unequal fray,
Remembering Whose we were, how dearly won:

Remembering Bethlehem, and that glorious night
When ye, who used to soar
Diverse along all space in fiery flight,
Came thronging to adore
Your God new-born, and made a sinner's child;
As if the stars should leave
Their stations in the far ethereal wild,
And round the sun a radiant circle weave.

Nor less your lay of triumph greeted fair
Our Champion and your King,
In that first strife, whence Satan in despair
Sunk down on scathèd wing:
Alone He fasted, and alone He fought;
But when His toils were o'er,
Ye to the sacred Hermit duteous brought
Banquet and hymn, your Eden's festal store.

Ye too, when lowest in th' abyss of woe
He plung'd to save His sheep,
Were leaning from your golden thrones to know
The secrets of that deep:
But clouds were on His sorrow: one alone
His agonising call
Summon'd from Heaven, to still that bitterest groan,
And comfort Him, the Comforter of all.

Oh! highest favor'd of all Spirits create,
(If right of thee we deem,)
How didst thou glide on brightening wing elate
To meet th' unclouded beam
Of Jesus from the couch of darkness rising!
How swell'd thine anthem's sound,
With fear and mightier joy weak hearts surprising,
"Your God is risen, and may not here be found."

Pass a few days, and this dull darkling globe
Must yield Him from her sight;—
Brighter and brighter streams His glory-robe,
And He is lost in light.

Then, when through yonder everlasting arch,
Ye in innumerous choir
Pour'd, heralding Messiah's conquering march,
Linger'd around His skirts two forms of fire:

With us they stay'd, high warning to impart;
"The Christ shall come again
Even as He goes; with the same human heart,
With the same godlike train."—
Oh! jealous God! how could a sinner dare
Think on that dreadful day,
But that with all Thy wounds Thou wilt be there,
And all our angel friends to bring Thee on Thy way?

Since to Thy little ones is given such grace,
That they who nearest stand
Alway to God in Heaven, and see His face,
Go forth at His command,
To wait around our path in weal or woe,
As erst upon our King,
Set Thy baptismal seal upon our brow,
And waft us heaven-ward with enfolding wing:

Grant, Lord, that when around th' expiring world
Our seraph guardians wait,
While on her death-bed, ere to ruin hurl'd,
She owns Thee, all too late,
They to their charge may turn, and thankful see
Thy mark upon us still;
Then all together rise, and reign with Thee,
And all their holy joy o'er contrite hearts fulfil!

FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED AT SEA

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee. *Isaiah* xliii. 2.

The shower of moonlight falls as still and clear
Upon the desert main,
As where sweet flowers some pastoral garden cheer
With fragrance after rain:

The wild winds rustle in the piping shrouds,
As in the quivering trees:
Like summer fields, beneath the shadowy clouds
The yielding waters darken in the breeze.

Thou too art here with thy soft inland tones,
Mother of our new birth;
The lonely ocean learns thy orisons,
And loves thy sacred mirth:
When storms are high, or when the fires of war
Come lightening round our course,
Thou breath'st a note like music from afar,
Tempering rude hearts with calm angelic force.

Far, far away, the homesick seaman's hoard,
Thy fragrant tokens live,
Like flower-leaves in a precious volume stor'd,
To solace and relieve
Some heart too weary of the restless world;
Or like thy sabbath Cross,
That o'er the brightening billow streams unfurl'd,
Whatever gale the laboring vessel toss.

O kindly soothing in high Victory's hour,
Or when a comrade dies,
In whose sweet presence Sorrow dares not lower,
Nor Expectation rise
Too high for earth; what mother's heart could spare
To the cold cheerless deep
Her flower and hope? but Thou art with him there,
Pledge of the untir'd arm and eye that cannot sleep:

The eye that watches o'er wild Ocean's dead,
Each in his coral cave,
Fondly as if the green turf wrapt his head
Fast by his father's grave.—
One moment, and the seeds of life shall spring
Out of the waste abyss,
And happy warriors triumph with their King
In worlds without a sea, unchanging orbs of bliss.

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES (1803–1849)

From *THE BRIDES' TRAGEDY*

(1822)

(I.i) [1] POOR OLD PILGRIM MISERY

Poor old pilgrim Misery,
  Beneath the silent moon he sate,
A-listening to the screech owl's cry,
  And the cold wind's goblin prate;
Beside him lay his staff of yew
  With withered willow twined,
His scant gray hair all wet with dew,
  His cheeks with grief ybrined;
    And his cry it was ever, alack!
      Alack, and woe is me!

Anon a wanton imp astray
  His piteous moaning hears,
And from his bosom steals away
  His rosary of tears:
With his plunder fled that urchin elf,
  And hid it in your eyes,
Then tell me back the stolen pelf,
  Give up the lawless prize;
    Or your cry shall be ever, alack!
      Alack, and woe is me!

(II.i) A HO! A HO!

  A ho! A ho!
Love's horn doth blow,
  And he will out a-hawking go.
His shafts are light as beauty's sighs,
And bright as midnight's brightest eyes,
    And round his starry way
The swan-winged horses of the skies,
With summer's music in their manes,
Curve their fair necks to zephyr's reins,
    And urge their graceful play.

  A ho! A ho!
Love's horn doth blow,
  And he will out a-hawking go.
The sparrows flutter round his wrist,
The feathery thieves that Venus kissed
    And taught their morning song;
The linnets seek the airy list,
And swallows too, small pets of Spring,
Beat back the gale with swifter wing,
    And dart and wheel along.

  A ho! A ho!
Love's horn doth blow,
  And he will out a-hawking go.
Now woe to every gnat that skips
To filch the fruit of ladies' lips,
    His felon blood is shed;
And woe to flies, whose airy ships
On beauty cast their anchoring bite,
And bandit wasp, that naughty wight,
    Whose sting is slaughter-red.

From *TORRISMOND*

(*1825*–1851)

(I.iii) HOW MANY TIMES DO I LOVE THEE, DEAR?

How many times do I love thee, dear?
  Tell me how many thoughts there be
    In the atmosphere
    Of a new-fall'n year,
Whose white and sable hours appear
  The latest flake of Eternity:
So many times do I love thee, dear.

How many times do I love again?
  Tell me how many beads there are
    In a silver chain
    Of evening rain,
Unravelled from the tumbling main,
  And threading the eye of a yellow star:
So many times do I love again.

From *DEATH'S JEST BOOK*

(*1825–1849*–1850)

(I. ii) TO SEA, TO SEA!

To sea, to sea! The calm is o'er;
  The wanton water leaps in sport,
And rattles down the pebbly shore;
  The dolphin wheels, the sea-cows snort,
And unseen mermaids' pearly song

[1] Numbers show act and scene.

Comes bubbling up, the weeds among.
Fling broad the sail, dip deep the oar:
To sea, to sea! the calm is o'er.

To sea, to sea! our wide-winged bark
Shall billowy cleave its sunny way,
And with its shadow, fleet and dark,
Break the caved Tritons' azure day,
Like mighty eagle soaring light
O'er antelopes on Alpine height.
The anchor heaves, the ship swings free,
The sails swell full. To sea, to sea!

(I. iv) THE SWALLOW LEAVES HER NEST

The swallow leaves her nest,
The soul my weary breast;
But therefore let the rain
On my grave
Fall pure; for why complain?
Since both will come again
O'er the wave.

The wind dead leaves and snow
Doth hurry to and fro;
And, once, a day shall break
O'er the wave,
When a storm of ghosts shall shake
The dead, until they wake
In the grave.

(II. i) IF THOU WILT EASE THINE HEART

If thou wilt ease thine heart
Of love and all its smart,
Then sleep, dear, sleep;
And not a sorrow
Hang any tear on your eyelashes;
Lie still and deep,
Sad soul, until the sea-wave washes
The rim o' the sun to-morrow,
In eastern sky.

But wilt thou cure thine heart
Of love and all its smart,
Then die, dear, die;
'Tis deeper, sweeter,
Than on a rose bank to lie dreaming
With folded eye;
And then alone, amid the beaming
Of love's stars, thou'lt meet her
In eastern sky.

(III. iii) AN EASTERN TALE

Time was when death was young and pitiful,
Though callous now by use: and then there dwelt,
In the thin world above, a beauteous Arab,
Unmated yet and boyish. To his couch
At night, which shone so starry through the boughs,
A pale flower-breathed nymph with dewy hair
Would often come, but all her love was silent;
And ne'er by daylight could he gaze upon her,
For ray by ray, as morning came, she paled,
And like a snow of air dissolv'd i' th' light,
Leaving behind a stalk with lilies hung,
Round which her womanish graces had assembled.
So did the early love-time of his youth
Pass with delight: but when, compelled at length,
He left the wilds and woods for riotous camps
And cities full of men, he saw no more,
Tho' prayed and wept for, his old bed-time vision,
The pale dissolving maiden. He would wander
Sleepless about the waste, benighted fields,
Asking the speechless shadows of his thoughts
"Who shared my couch? Who was my love? Where is she?"
Thus passing through a grassy burial ground,
Wherein a new-dug grave gaped wide for food,
"Who was she?" cried he, and the earthy mouth
Did move its nettle-bearded lips together,
And said "'Twas I—I, Death: behold our child!"
The wanderer looked, and on the lap of the pit
A young child slept as at a mother's breast.

(IV. iii) LADY, WAS IT FAIR OF THEE

Lady, was it fair of thee
To seem so passing fair to me?
Not every star to every eye

Is fair; and why
Art thou another's share?
Did thine eyes shed brighter glances,
Thine unkissed bosom heave more fair,
To his than to my fancies?
But I'll forgive thee still;
Thou'rt fair without thy will.
So be: but never know,
That 'tis the hue of woe.

Lady, was it fair of thee
To be so gentle still to me?
Not every lip to every eye
Should let smiles fly.
Why didst thou never frown,
To frighten from my pillow
Love's head, round which Hope wove a crown,
And saw not 'twas of willow?
But I'll forgive thee still,
Thou knew'st not smiles could kill.
Smile on: but never know,
I die, nor of what woe.

(IV. iii) A CYPRESS-BOUGH, AND A ROSE-WREATH SWEET

A cypress bough, and a rose-wreath sweet,
A wedding-robe, and a winding-sheet,
A bridal bed and a bier.
Thine be the kisses, maid,
And smiling Love's alarms;
And thou, pale youth, be laid
In the grave's cold arms.
Each in his own charms,
Death and Hymen both are here;
So up with scythe and torch,
And to the old church porch,
While all the bells ring clear:
And rosy, rosy the bed shall bloom,
And earthy, earthy heap up the tomb.

Now tremble dimples on your cheek,
Sweet be your lips to taste and speak,
For he who kisses is near:
By her the bride-god fair,
In youthful power and force;
By him the grizard bare,
Pale knight on a pale horse,
To woo him to a corse.
Death and Hymen both are here,
So up with scythe and torch,
And to the old church porch,
While all the bells ring clear:
And rosy, rosy the bed shall bloom,
And earthy, earthy heap up the tomb.

(V. iv) OLD ADAM, THE CARRION CROW

Old Adam, the carrion crow,
The old crow of Cairo;
He sat in the shower, and let it flow
Under his tail and over his crest;
And through every feather
Leaked the wet weather;
And the bough swung under his nest;
For his beak it was heavy with marrow.
Is that the wind dying? O no;
It's only two devils, that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghosts' moonshine.

Ho! Eve, my gray carrion wife,
When we have supped on kings' marrow,
Where shall we drink and make merry our life?
Our nest it is queen Cleopatra's skull,
'Tis cloven and cracked,
And battered and hacked,
But with tears of blue eyes it is full:
Let us drink then, my raven of Cairo.
Is that the wind dying? O no;
It's only two devils, that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghosts' moonshine.

(V. iv) WE DO LIE BENEATH THE GRASS

We do lie beneath the grass
In the moonlight, in the shade
Of the yew-tree. They that pass
Hear us not. We are afraid
They would envy our delight,
In our graves by glow-worm night.
Come follow us, and smile as we;
We sail to the rock in the ancient waves,
Where the snow falls by thousands into the sea,
And the drowned and the shipwrecked have happy graves.

THE BODING DREAMS

(1851)

In lover's ear a wild voice cried:
"Sleeper, awake and rise!"
A pale form stood at his bedside,
With heavy tears in her sad eyes.
"A beckoning hand, a moaning sound,
A new-dug grave in weedy ground
For her who sleeps in dreams of thee.

Awake! Let not the murder be!"
Unheard the faithful dream did pray,
And sadly sighed itself away.
"Sleep on," sung Sleep, "to-morrow
'Tis time to know thy sorrow."
"Sleep on," sung Death, "to-morrow
From me thy sleep thou'lt borrow."
Sleep on, lover, sleep on,
The tedious dream is gone;
The bell tolls one.

Another hour, another dream:
"Awake! awake!" it wailed,
"Arise, ere with the moon's last beam
Her dearest life hath paled."
A hidden light, a muffled tread,
A daggered hand beside the bed
Of her who sleeps in dreams of thee.
Thou wak'st not: let the murder be.
In vain the faithful dream did pray,
And sadly sighed itself away.
"Sleep on," sung Sleep, "to-morrow
'Tis time to know thy sorrow."
"Sleep on," sung Death, "to-morrow
From me thy sleep thou'lt borrow."
Sleep on, lover, sleep on,
The tedious dream is gone;
Soon comes the sun.

Another hour, another dream:
A red wound on a snowy breast,
A rude hand stifling the last scream,
On rosy lips a death-kiss pressed.
Blood on the sheets, blood on the floor,
The murderer stealing through the door.
"Now," said the voice, with comfort deep,
"She sleeps indeed, and thou may'st sleep."
The scornful dream then turned away
To the first, weeping cloud of day.
"Sleep on," sung Sleep, "to-morrow
'Tis time to know thy sorrow."
"Sleep on," sung Death, "to-morrow
From me thy sleep thou'lt borrow."
Sleep on, lover, sleep on,
The tedious dream is gone;
The murder's done.

DREAM-PEDLARY

(1851)

If there were dreams to sell,
What would you buy?
Some cost a passing bell;
Some a light sigh,
That shakes from Life's fresh crown
Only a rose-leaf down.
If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rang the bell,
What would you buy?

A cottage lone and still,
With bowers nigh,
Shadowy, my woes to still,
Until I die.
Such pearls from Life's fresh crown
Fain would I shake me down.
Were dreams to have at will,
This would best heal my ill,
This would I buy.

But there were dreams to sell
Ill didst thou buy;
Life is a dream, they tell,
Waking, to die.
Dreaming a dream to prize,
Is wishing ghosts to rise;
And if I had the spell
To call the buried well,
Which one would I?

If there are ghosts to raise,
What shall I call,
Out of hell's murky haze,
Heaven's blue pall?
Raise my loved long-lost boy,
To lead me to his joy.—
There are no ghosts to raise;
Out of death lead no ways;
Vain is the call.

Know'st thou not ghosts to sue,
No love thou hast.
Else lie, as I will do,
And breathe thy last.
So out of Life's fresh crown
Fall like a rose-leaf down.
Thus are the ghosts to woo;
Thus are all dreams made true,
Ever to last.

THE PHANTOM WOOER

(1851)

I

A ghost, that loved a lady fair,
Ever in the starry air
Of midnight at her pillow stood;
And, with a sweetness skies above
The luring words of human love,
Her soul the phantom wooed.
Sweet and sweet is their poisoned note,
The little snakes of silver throat,

In mossy skulls that nest and lie,
Ever singing "die, oh! die."

II

Young soul put off your flesh, and come
With me into the quiet tomb,
Our bed is lovely, dark, and sweet;
The earth will swing us, as she goes,
Beneath our coverlid of snows,
And the warm leaden sheet.
Dear and dear is their poisoned note,
The little snakes of silver throat,
In mossy skulls that nest and lie,
Ever singing "die, oh! die."

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR (1775–1864)

ROSE AYLMER

(1806)

Ah what avails the sceptred race,
Ah what the form divine!
What every virtue, every grace!
Rose Aylmer, all were thine.
Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and of sighs
I consecrate to thee.

FIESOLAN IDYL

(1831)

Here, where precipitate Spring, with one
light bound
Into hot Summer's lusty arms, expires,
And where go forth at morn, at eve, at
night,
Soft airs that want the lute to play with
'em,
And softer sighs that know not what they
want,
Aside a wall, beneath an orange-tree,
Whose tallest flowers could tell the lowlier
ones
Of sights in Fiesolé right up above,
While I was gazing a few paces off
At what they seem'd to show me with
their nods,
Their frequent whispers and their pointing
shoots,
A gentle maid came down the garden-steps
And gathered the pure treasure in her lap.
I heard the branches rustle, and stepped
forth
To drive the ox away or mule, or goat,
Such I believed it must be. How could I
Let beast o'erpower them? When hath wind
or rain
Borne hard upon weak plant that wanted
me,
And I (however they might bluster round)
Walked off? 'Twere most ungrateful: for
sweet scents
Are the swift vehicles of still sweeter
thoughts,
And nurse and pillow the dull memory
That would let drop without them her best
stores.
They bring me tales of youth and tones
of love.
And 'tis and ever was my wish and way
To let all flowers live freely, and all die
(Whene'er their Genius bids their souls
depart)
Among their kindred in their native place.
I never pluck the rose; the violet's head
Hath shaken with my breath upon its
bank
And not reproached me: the ever-sacred
cup
Of the pure lily hath between my hands
Felt safe, unsoil'd, nor lost one grain of
gold.
I saw the light that made the glossy leaves
More glossy; the fair arm, the fairer
cheek
Warmed by the eye intent on its pur-
suit;
I saw the foot that, altho' half-erect
From its gray slipper, could not lift her
up
To what she wanted: I held down a
branch
And gather'd her some blossoms; since
their hour
Was come, and bees had wounded them,
and flies
Of harder wing were working their way
thro'
And scattering them in fragments under-
foot.
So crisp were some, they rattled unevolved,
Others, ere broken off, fell into shells,
For such appear the petals when detached
Unbending, brittle, lucid, white like snow,

And like snow not seen thro', by eye or sun:
Yet every one her gown received from me
Was fairer than the first. I thought not so,
But so she praised them to reward my care.
I said, "You find the largest."
"This indeed,"
Cried she, "is large and sweet." She held one forth,
Whether for me to look at or to take
She knew not, nor did I; but taking it
Would best have solved (and this she felt) her doubt.
I dared not touch it; for it seemed a part
Of her own self; fresh, full, the most mature
Of blossoms, yet a blossom; with a touch
To fall, and yet unfallen. She drew back
The boon she tender'd, and then, finding not
The ribbon at her waist to fix it in,
Dropped it, as loth to drop it, on the rest.

CHILD OF A DAY, THOU KNOWEST NOT

(1831)

Child of a day, thou knowest not
The tears that overflow thine urn,
The gushing eyes that read thy lot,
Nor, if thou knewest, couldst return!
And why the wish! the pure and blessed
Watch like thy mother o'er thy sleep.
O peaceful night! O envied rest!
Thou wilt not ever see her weep.

LYRICS, TO IANTHE

(1831)

Away my verse; and never fear,
As men before such beauty do;
On you she will not look severe.
She will not turn her eyes from you.
Some happier graces could I lend
That in her memory you should live,
Some little blemishes might blend,
For it would please her to forgive.

When Helen first saw wrinkles in her face
('Twas when some fifty long had settled there
And intermarried and branched off awide)
She threw herself upon her couch and wept:
On this side hung her head, and over that
Listlessly she let fall the faithless brass
That made the men as faithless.
But when you
Found them, or fancied them, and would not hear
That they were only vestiges of smiles,
Or the impression of some amorous hair
Astray from cloistered curls and roseate band,
Which had been lying there all night perhaps
Upon a skin so soft, "No, no," you said,
"Sure, they are coming, yes, are come, are here:
Well, and what matters it, while thou art too!"

Ianthe! you are call'd to cross the sea!
A path forbidden *me!*
Remember, while the Sun his blessing sheds
Upon the mountain-heads,
How often we have watched him laying down
His brow, and dropped our own
Against each other's, and how faint and short
And sliding the support!
What will succeed it now? Mine is unblessed,
Ianthe! nor will rest
But on the very thought that swells with pain.
O bid me hope again!
O give me back what Earth, what (without you)
Not Heaven itself can do,
One of the golden days that we have past;
And let it be my last!
Or else the gift would be, however sweet,
Fragile and incomplete.

. . . . . .

Pleasure! why thus desert the heart
In its spring-tide?
I could have seen her, I could part,
And but have sigh'd!
O'er every youthful charm to stray,
To gaze, to touch . . .
Pleasure! why take so much away,
Or give so much!

Mild is the parting year, and sweet
The odor of the falling spray;

Life passes on more rudely fleet,
And balmless is its closing day.

I wait its close, I court its gloom,
But mourn that never must there fall
Or on my breast or on my tomb
The tear that would have sooth'd it all.

Past ruin'd Ilion Helen lives,
Alcestis rises from the shades;
Verse calls them forth; 'tis verse that gives
Immortal youth to mortal maids.

Soon shall Oblivion's deepening veil
Hide all the peopled hills you see,
The gay, the proud, while lovers hail
These many summers you and me.

ALL TENDER THOUGHTS THAT E'ER POSSESS'D

(1831)

All tender thoughts that e'er possess'd
The human brain or human breast,
Centre in mine for thee—
Excepting one—and that must thou
Contribute: come, confer it now:
Grateful I fain would be.

SO LATE REMOVED, FROM HIM SHE SWORE

(1831)

So late removed from him she swore,
With clasping arms and vows and tears,
In life and death she would adore,
While memory, fondness, bliss, endears.

Can she forswear? can she forget?
Strike, mighty Love! strike, Vengeance! Soft!
Conscience must come and bring regret—
These let her feel!—nor these too oft!

FOR AN EPITAPH AT FIESOLE

(1831)

Lo! where the four mimosas blend their shade
In calm repose at last is Landor laid,
For ere he slept he saw them planted here
By her his soul had ever held most dear,
And he had lived enough when he had dried her tear.

THE MAID'S LAMENT

(1834)

I loved him not; and yet now he is gone
I feel I am alone.
I check'd him while he spoke; yet could he speak,
Alas! I would not check.
For reasons not to love him once I sought,
And wearied all my thought
To vex myself and him: I now would give
My love, could he but live
Who lately lived for me, and when he found
'Twas vain, in holy ground
He hid his face amid the shades of death.
I waste for him my breath
Who wasted his for me: but mine returns,
And this lorn bosom burns
With stifling heat, heaving it up in sleep,
And waking me to weep
Tears that had melted his soft heart: for years
Wept he as bitter tears.
Merciful God! such was his latest prayer,
These may she never share.
Quieter is his breath, his breast more cold,
Than daisies in the mould,
Where children spell, athwart the churchyard gate,
His name and life's brief date.
Pray for him, gentle souls, whoe'er you be,
And oh! pray too for me.

THE SHADES OF AGAMEMNON AND IPHIGENEIA

(1836)

Iphigeneia. Father! I now may lean upon your breast,
And you with unreverted eyes will grasp
Iphigeneia's hand.
We are not shades
Surely! for yours throb yet,
And did my blood
Win Troy for Greece?
Ah! 'twas ill done, to shrink;
But the sword gleam'd so sharp; and the good priest
Trembled, and Pallas frown'd above, severe.
Agamemnon. Daughter!
Iphigeneia. Belovèd father! is the blade
Again to pierce my bosom? 'tis unfit

For sacrifice; no blood is in its veins,
No God requires it here: here are no wrongs
To vindicate, no realms to overthrow.
You standing as at Aulis in the fane,
With face averted, holding (as before)
My hand; but yours burns not, as then it burn'd.
This alone shows me we are with the Blessed,
Nor subject to the sufferings we have borne.
I will win back past kindness.
Tell me then,
Tell how my mother fares who loved me so,
And griev'd, as 'twere for you, to see me part.
Frown not, but pardon me for tarrying
Amid too idle words, nor asking how
She prais'd us both (which most?) for what we did.
Agamemnon. Ye Gods who govern here! do human pangs
Reach the pure soul thus far below? do tears
Spring in these meadows?
Iphigeneia. No, sweet father, no . . .
I could have answered that; why ask the Gods?
Agamemnon. Iphigeneia! O my child! the Earth
Has gendered crimes unheard of heretofore,
And Nature may have changed in her last depths,
Together with the Gods and all their laws.
Iphigeneia. Father! we must not let you here condemn;
Not, were the day less joyful: recollect
We have no wicked here; no king to judge.
Poseidon, we have heard, with bitter rage
Lashes his foaming steeds against the skies,
And, laughing with loud yell at winged fire,
Innoxious to his fields and palaces
Affrights the eagle from the sceptred hand;
While Pluto, gentlest brother of the three
And happiest in obedience, views sedate
His tranquil realm, nor envies theirs above.
No change have we, not even day for night
Nor spring for summer.
All things are serene,
Serene too be your spirit! None on earth
Ever was half so kindly in his house,
And so compliant, even to a child.
Never was snatch'd your robe away from me,
Though going to the council. The blind man
Knew his good king was leading him indoors,
Before he heard the voice that marshal'd Greece.
Therefore all prais'd you.
Proudest men themselves
In others praise humility, and most
Admire it in the sceptre and the sword.
What then can make you speak thus rapidly
And briefly? in your step thus hesitate?
Are you afraid to meet among the good
Incestuous Helen here?
Agamemnon. O! gods of hell!
Iphigeneia. She hath not past the river.
We may walk
With our hands link'd nor feel our house's shame.
Agamemnon. Never mayst thou, Iphigeneia, feel it!
Aulis had no sharp sword, thou wouldst exclaim,
Greece no avenger—I, her chief so late,
Through Erebos, through Elysium, writhe beneath it.
Iphigeneia. Come, I have better diadems than those
Of Argos and Mycenai: come away,
And I will weave them for you on the bank,
You will not look so pale when you have walk'd
A little in the grove, and have told all
Those sweet fond words the widow sent her child.
Agamemnon. O Earth! I suffered less upon thy shores!
(*Aside.*) The bath that bubbled with my blood, the blows
That spilt it (O worse torture!) must she know?
Ah! the first woman coming from Mycenai
Will pine to pour this poison in her ear,
Taunting sad Charon for his slow advance.
Iphigeneia!
Iphigeneia. Why thus turn away?
Calling me with such fondness! I am here,
Father! and where you are, will ever be.
Agamemnon. Thou art my child; yes, yes, thou art my child.
All was not once what all now is! Come on,
Idol of love and truth! my child! my child!

(*Alone.*) Fell woman! ever false! false was thy last
Denunciation, as thy bridal vow;
And yet even that found faith with me! The dirk
Which sever'd flesh from flesh, where this hand rests,
Severs not, as thou boastedst in thy scoffs,
Iphigeneia's love from Agamemnon:
The wife's a spark may light, a straw consume.
The daughter's not her heart's whole fount hath quench'd,
'Tis worthy of the Gods, and lives for ever.

Iphigeneia. What spake my father to the Gods above?
Unworthy am I then to join in prayer?
If, on the last, or any day before,
Of my brief course on earth, I did amiss,
Say it at once, and let me be unblessed;
But, O my faultless father! why should you?
And shun so my embraces?
Am I wild
And wandering in my fondness?
We are shades!
Groan not thus deeply; blight not thus the season
Of full-orb'd gladness! Shades we are indeed,
But mingled, let us feel it, with the blessed.
I knew it, but forgot it suddenly,
Altho' I felt it all at your approach.
Look on me; smile with me at my illusion.
You are so like what you have ever been
(Except in sorrow!) I might well forget
I could not win you as I used to do.
It was the first embrace since my descent
I ever aim'd at: those who love me live,
Save one, who loves me most, and now would chide me.

Agamemnon. We want not, O Iphigeneia, we
Want not embrace, nor kiss that cools the heart
With purity, nor words that more and more
Teach what we know, from those we know, and sink
Often most deeply where they fall most light.
Time was when for the faintest breath of thine
Kingdom and life were little.

Iphigeneia. Value them
As little now.

Agamemnon. Were life and kingdom all!

Iphigeneia. Ah! by our death many are sad who loved us.
The little fond Electra, and Orestes
So childish and so bold! O that mad boy!
They will be happy too.
Cheer! king of men!
Cheer! there are voices, songs—Cheer! arms advance.

Agamemnon. Come to me, soul of peace! These, these alone,
These are not false embraces.

Iphigeneia. Both are happy!

Agamemnon. Freshness breathes round me from some breeze above.
What are ye, wingèd ones! with golden urns?

The Hours

(*Descending.*) To each an urn we bring:
Earth's purest gold
Alone can hold
The lymph of the Lethean spring.
We, son of Atreus! we divide
The dulcet from the bitter tide
That runs athwart the paths of men.
No more our pinions shalt thou see.
Take comfort! We have done with thee,
And must away to earth again.
(*Ascending.*) Where thou art, thou
Of braided brow,
Thou cull'd too soon from Argive bowers,
Where thy sweet voice is heard among
The shades that thrill with choral song,
None can regret the parted Hours.

(*As the Hours depart, the shades of the Argive warriors who had fought at Troy approach and chant in chorus the praises of Agamemnon and his daughter.*)

Chorus of Argives

Maiden! be thou the spirit that breathes
Triumph and joy into our song!
Wear and bestow these amaranth-wreaths,
Iphigeneia—they belong
To none but thee and her who reigns
(Less chanted) on our bosky plains.

Semi-chorus

Iphigeneia! 'tis to thee
Glory we owe and victory.

Clash, men of Argos, clash your arms,
To martial worth and virgin charms.

Other Semi-chorus

Ye men of Argos! it was sweet
To roll the fruits of conquest at the feet
Whose whispering sound made bravest hearts beat fast.
This we have known at home;
But hither we are come
To crown the king who ruled us first and last.

Chorus

Father of Argos! king of men!
We chant the hymn of praise to thee.
In serried ranks we stand again,
Our glory safe, our country free.
Clash, clash the arms we bravely bore
Against Scamander's God-defended shore.

Semi-chorus

Blessed art thou who hast repell'd
Battle's wild fury, Ocean's whelming foam;
Blessed o'er all, to have beheld
Wife, children, house avenged, and peaceful home!

Other Semi-chorus

We, too, thou seest, are now
Among the happy, though the aged brow
From sorrow for us we could not protect,
Nor, on the polished granite of the well
Folding our arms, of spoils and perils tell,
Nor lift the vase on the lov'd head erect.

Semi-chorus

What whirling wheels are those behind?
What plumes come flaring through the wind,
Nearer and nearer? From his car
He who defied the heaven-born Powers of war
Pelides springs! Dust, dust are we
To him, O king, who bends the knee,
Proud only to be first in reverent praise of thee.

Other Semi-Chorus

Clash, clash the arms! None other race
Shall see such heroes face to face.
We too have fought; and they have seen
Nor sea-sand gray nor meadow green
Where Dardans stood against their men.
Clash! Io Paean! clash again!
Repinings for lost days repress.
The flames of Troy had cheer'd us less.

Chorus

Hark! from afar more war-steeds neigh,
Thousands o'er thousands rush this way.
Ajax is yonder! ay, behold
The radiant arms of Lycian gold!
Arms from admiring valor won,
Tydeus! and worthy of thy son.
'Tis Ajax wears them now; for he
Rules over Adria's stormy sea.

He threw them to the friend who lost
(By the dim judgment of the host)
Those wet with tears which Thetis gave
The youth most beauteous of the brave.
In vain! the insatiate soul would go
For comfort to his peers below.
Clash! ere we leave them all the plain,
Clash! Io Paean! once again.

THE DEATH OF ARTEMIDORA

(1836)

"Artemidora! Gods invisible,
While thou art lying faint along the couch,
Have tied the sandal to thy slender feet
And stand beside thee, ready to convey
Thy weary steps where other rivers flow.
Refreshing shades will waft thy weariness
Away, and voices like thy own come near
And nearer, and solicit an embrace."
Artemidora sigh'd, and would have pressed
The hand now pressing hers, but was too weak.
Iris stood over her dark hair unseen
While thus Elpenor spake. He looked into
Eyes that had given light and life erewhile
To those above them, but now dim with tears

And wakefulness. Again he spake of joy
Eternal. At that word, that sad word, *joy*,
Faithful and fond her bosom heav'd once more:
Her head fell back; and now a loud deep sob
Swell'd thro' the darken'd chamber; 'twas not hers.

LITTLE AGLAE

(1836)

TO HER FATHER, ON HER STATUE BEING CALLED LIKE HER

Father! the little girl we see
Is not, I fancy, so like me;
You never hold her on your knee.

When she came home, the other day,
You kiss'd her; but I cannot say
She kiss'd you first and ran away.

DIRCE

(1836)

Stand close around, ye Stygian set,
With Dirce in one boat conveyed,
Or Charon, seeing, may forget
That he is old, and she a shade.

ON LUCRETIA BORGIA'S HAIR

(1837)

Borgia, thou once wert almost too august
And high for adoration; now thou'rt dust;
All that remains of thee these plaits unfold,
Calm hair meandering in pellucid gold.

TO WORDSWORTH

(1837)

Those who have laid the harp aside
And turn'd to idler things,
From very restlessness have tried
The loose and dusty strings,
And, catching back some favorite strain,
Run with it o'er the chords again.

But Memory is not a Muse,
O Wordsworth! though 'tis said
They all descend from her, and use
To haunt her fountain-head:
That other men should work for me
In the rich mines of Poesie,

Pleases me better than the toil
Of smoothing under hardened hand,
With attic emery and oil,
The shining point for Wisdom's wand,
Like those thou temperest 'mid the rills
Descending from thy native hills.
Without his governance, in vain,
Manhood is strong, and Youth is bold.

If oftentimes the o'er-piled strain,
Clogs in the furnace and grows cold
Beneath his pinions deep and frore,
And swells and melts and flows no more,
That is because the heat beneath
Pants in its cavern poorly fed.
Life springs not from the couch of Death,
Nor Muse nor Grace can raise the dead;
Unturn'd then let the mass remain,
Intractable to sun or rain.

A marsh, where only flat leaves lie,
And showing but the broken sky,
Too surely is the sweetest lay
That wins the ear and wastes the day,
Where youthful Fancy pouts alone
And lets not Wisdom touch her zone.

He who would build his fame up high,
The rule and plummet must apply.
Nor say, "I'll do what I have plann'd,"
Before he try if loam or sand
Be still remaining in the place
Delved for each polished pillar's base.
With skilful eye and fit device
Thou raisest every edifice,
Whether in sheltered vale it stand,
Or overlook the Dardan strand,
Amid the cypresses that mourn
Laodameia's love forlorn.

We both have run o'er half the space
Listed for mortal's earthly race;
We both have crossed life's fervid line,
And other stars before us shine:
May they be bright and prosperous
As those that have been stars for us!
Our course by Milton's light was sped,
And Shakespeare shining overhead:
Chatting on deck was Dryden too,
The Bacon of the rhyming crew;
None ever cross'd our mystic sea
More richly stored with thought than he;
Tho' never tender nor sublime,

He wrestles with and conquers Time.
To learn my lore on Chaucer's knee,
I left much prouder company;
Thee gentle Spenser fondly led,
But me he mostly sent to bed.

I wish them every joy above
That highly blessèd spirits prove,
Save one: and that too shall be theirs,
But after many rolling years,
When 'mid their light thy light appears.

TO JOSEPH ABLETT

(1837)

Lord of the Celtic dells,
Where Clwyd listens as his minstrel tells
Of Arthur, or Pendragon, or perchance
The plumes of flashy France,
Or, in dark region far across the main,
Far as Grenada in the world of Spain,

Warriors untold to Saxon ear,
Until their steel-clad spirits reappear;
How happy were the hours that held
Thy friend (long absent from his native home)
Amid thy scenes with thee! how wide afield
From all past cares and all to come!

What hath Ambition's feverish grasp, what hath
Inconstant Fortune, panting Hope;
What Genius, that should cope
With the heart-whispers in that path
Winding so idly, where the idler stream
Flings at the white-haired poplars gleam for gleam?

Ablett! of all the days
My sixty summers ever knew,
Pleasant as there have been no few,
Memory not one surveys
Like those we spent together. Wisely spent
Are they alone that leave the soul content.

Together we have visited the men
Whom Pictish pirates vainly would have drowned;
Ah, shall we ever clasp the hand again
That gave the British harp its truest sound?
Live, Derwent's guest! and thou by Grasmere's springs!
Serene creators of immortal things.[1]

And live too thou for happier days
Whom Dryden's force and Spenser's fays
Have heart and soul possess'd,[2]
Growl in Grim London he who will,
Revisit thou Maiano's hill,
And swell with pride his sunburnt breast.

Old Redi in his easy-chair
With varied chant awaits thee there,
And here are voices in the grove
Aside my house, that make me think
Bacchus is coming down to drink
To Ariadne's love.

But whither am I borne away
From thee, to whom began my lay?
Courage! I am not yet quite lost;
I stepped aside to greet my friends;
Believe me, soon the greeting ends,
I know but three or four at most.

Deem not that Time hath borne too hard
Upon the fortunes of thy bard,
Leaving me only three or four:
'Tis my old number; dost thou start
At such a tale? in what man's heart
Is there fireside for more?

I never courted friends or Fame;
She pouted at me long, at last she came,
And threw her arms around my neck and said,
"Take what hath been for years delay'd,
And fear not that the leaves will fall
One hour the earlier from thy coronal."

Ablett! thou knowest with what even hand
I waved away the offer'd seat
Among the clambering, clattering, stilted great,
The rulers of our land;
Nor crowds nor kings can lift me up,
Nor sweeten Pleasure's purer cup.

Thou knowest how, and why, are dear to me
My citron groves of Fiesole,
My chirping Affrico, my beechwood nook,
My Naiads, with feet only in the brook,
Which runs away and giggles in their faces,
Yet there they sit, nor sigh for other places.

'Tis not Pelasgian wall,
By him made sacred whom alone
'Twere not profane to call
The bard divine, nor (thrown
Far under me) Valdarno, nor the crest
Of Vallombrosa in the crimson east.

1 Southey and Wordsworth.

2 Leigh Hunt.

Here can I sit or roam at will:
Few trouble me, few wish me ill,
Few come across me, few too near;
Here all my wishes make their stand;
Here ask I no one's voice or hand;
Scornful of favor, ignorant of fear.

Yon vine upon the maple bough
Flouts at the hearty wheat below;
Away her venal wines the wise man sends,
While those of lower stem he brings
From inmost treasure vault, and sings
Their worth and age among his chosen friends.

Behold our Earth, most nigh the sun
Her zone least opens to the genial heat,
But farther off her veins more freely run:
'Tis thus with those who whirl about the great;
The nearest shrink and shiver, we remote
May open-breasted blow the pastoral oat.

ON HIS OWN IPHIGENEIA AND AGAMEMNON

(1837)

From eve to morn, from morn to parting night
Father and daughter stood within my sight.
I felt the looks they gave, the words they said,
And reconducted each serener shade.
Ever shall these to me be well-spent days,
Sweet fell the tears upon them, sweet the praise.
Far from the footstool of the tragic throne,
I am tragedian in that scene alone.

FAREWELL TO ITALY

(*1835*–1846)

I leave thee, beauteous Italy! no more
From the high terraces, at eventide,
To look supine into thy depths of sky,
Thy golden moon between the cliff and me,
Or thy dark spires of fretted cypresses
Bordering the channel of the milky-way.
Fiesole and Valdarno must be dreams
Hereafter, and my own lost Affrico
Murmur to me but in the poet's song.
I did believe (what have I not believed?)
Weary with age, but unoppressed by pain,
To close in thy soft clime my quiet day
And rest my bones in the Mimosa's shade.
Hope! Hope! few ever cherished thee so little;
Few are the heads thou hast so rarely raised;
But thou didst promise this, and all was well.
For we are fond of thinking where to lie
When every pulse hath ceased, when the lone heart
Can lift no aspiration—reasoning
As if the sight were unimpaired by death,
Were unobstructed by the coffin-lid,
And the sun cheered corruption! Over all
The smiles of nature shed a potent charm,
And light us to our chamber at the grave.

MOTHER, I CANNOT MIND MY WHEEL

(1846)

Mother, I cannot mind my wheel:
My fingers ache, my lips are dry:
Oh! if you felt the pain I feel!
But oh, who ever felt as I?
No longer could I doubt him true—
All other men may use deceit;
He always said my eyes were blue,
And often swore my lips were sweet.

A SEA-SHELL SPEAKS

(1846)

Of late among the rocks I lay,
But just behind the fretful spray,
When suddenly a step drew near,
And a man's voice, distinct and clear,
Conveyed this solace:
"Come with me,
Thou little outcast of the sea!
Our destiny, poor shell, is one;
We both may shine, but shine alone:
Both are deprived of all we had
In earlier days to make us glad,
Or ask us why we should be sad:
Which (you may doubt it as you will)
To manly hearts is dearer still."
I felt, ere half these words were o'er,
A few salt drops on me once more.

FATE, I HAVE ASKED FEW THINGS OF THEE

(1846)

Fate! I have asked few things of thee,
  And fewer have to ask.
Shortly, thou knowest, I shall be
  No more: then con thy task.

If one be left on earth so late
  Whose love is like the past,
Tell her in whispers, gentle Fate!
  Not even love must last.

Tell her I leave the noisy feast
  Of life, a little tired,
Amid its pleasures few possest
  And many undesired.

Tell her with steady pace to come
  And, where my laurels lie,
To throw the freshest on the tomb,
  When it has caught her sigh.

Tell her to stand some steps apart
  From others on that day,
And check the tear (if tear should start)
  Too precious for dull clay.

TO A BRIDE

FEBRUARY 17, 1846 [1]

A still, serene, soft day; enough of sun
To wreathe the cottage smoke like pine-tree snow,
Whiter than those white flowers the bride-maids wore;
Upon the silent boughs the lissom air
Rested; and, only when it went, they moved,
Nor more than under linnet springing off.
Such was the wedding morn: the joyous Year
Leapt over March and April up to May.
  Regent of rising and of ebbing hearts,
Thyself borne on in cool serenity,
All heaven around and bending over thee,
All earth below and watchful of thy course!
Well hast thou chosen, after long demur
To aspirations from more realms than one.
Peace be with those thou leavest! peace with thee!
Is that enough to wish thee? not enough,
But very much: for Love himself feels pain,
While brighter plumage shoots, to shed last year's;
And one at home (how dear that one!) recalls
Thy name, and thou recallest one at home.
Yet turn not back thine eyes; the hour of tears
Is over; nor believe thou that Romance
Closes against pure Faith her rich domain.
Shall only blossoms flourish there? Arise,
Far sighted bride! look forward! clearer views
And higher hopes lie under calmer skies.
Fortune in vain call'd out to thee; in vain
Rays from high regions darted; Wit pour'd out
His sparkling treasures; Wisdom laid his crown
Of richer jewels at thy reckless feet.
Well hast thou chosen. I repeat the words,
Adding as true ones, not untold before,
That incense must have fire for its ascent,
Else 'tis inert and can not reach the idol.
Youth is the sole equivalent of youth.
Enjoy it while it lasts; and last it will;
Love can prolong it in despite of Years.

[1] The bride was the daughter of Rose Aylmer's half-sister.

DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

(1846)

"Do you remember me? or are you proud?"
Lightly advancing thro' her star-trimm'd crowd,
  Ianthe said, and looked into my eyes.
"A *yes*, a *yes*, to both: for Memory
Where you but once have been must ever be,
  And at your voice Pride from his throne must rise."

NO, MY OWN LOVE

(1846)

No, my own love of other years!
  No, it must never be.
Much rests with you that yet endears,
  Alas! but what with me?
Could those bright years o'er me revolve
  So gay, o'er you so fair,
The pearl of life we would dissolve
  And each the cup might share.
You show that truth can ne'er decay,

Whatever fate befalls;
I, that the myrtle and the bay
Shoot fresh on ruin'd walls.

ONE YEAR AGO

(1846)

One year ago my path was green,
My footstep light, my brow serene;
Alas! and could it have been so
One year ago?

There is a love that is to last
When the hot days of youth are past:
Such love did a sweet maid bestow
One year ago.

I took a leaflet from her braid
And gave it to another maid,
Love! broken should have been thy bow
One year ago.

YES, I WRITE VERSES NOW AND THEN

(1846)

Yes; I write verses now and then,
But blunt and flaccid is my pen,
No longer talked of by young men
As rather clever:
In the last quarter are my eyes,
You see it by their form and size;
Is it not time then to be wise ?
Or now or never.

Fairest that ever sprang from Eve!
While Time allows the short reprieve,
Just look at me! would you believe
'Twas once a lover?
I cannot clear the five-bar gate,
But, trying first its timbers' state,
Climb stiffly up, take breath, and wait
To trundle over.

Thro' gallopade I cannot swing
The entangling blooms of Beauty's spring:
I cannot say the tender thing,
Be't true or false,
And am beginning to opine
Those girls are only half-divine
Whose waists yon wicked boys entwine
In giddy waltz.

I fear that arm above that shoulder,
I wish them wiser, graver, older,
Sedater, and no harm if colder,
And panting less.
Ah! people were not half so wild
In former days, when, starchly mild,
Upon her high-heel'd Essex smiled
The brave Queen Bess.

YOU SMILED, YOU SPOKE

(1846)

You smiled, you spoke, and I believed,
By every word and smile deceived.
Another man would hope no more;
Nor hope I what I hoped before:
But let not this last wish be vain;
Deceive, deceive me once again!

SOON, O IANTHE! LIFE IS O'ER

(1846)

Soon, O Ianthe! life is o'er,
And sooner beauty's heavenly smile:
Grant only (and I ask no more),
Let love remain that little while.

TO A CYCLAMEN

(1846)

I come to visit thee again,
My little flowerless cyclamen;
To touch the hand, almost to press,
That cheered thee in thy loneliness.
What could thy careful guardian find
Of thee in form, of me in mind,
What is there in us rich or rare,
To make us claim a moment's care?
Unworthy to be so caressed,
We are but withering leaves at best.

GIVE ME THE EYES

(1846)

Give me the eyes that look on mine,
And, when they see them dimly shine,
Are moister than they were.
Give me the eyes that fain would find
Some relics of a youthful mind
Amid the wrecks of care.
Give me the eyes that catch at last
A few faint glimpses of the past,
And, like the arkite dove,
Bring back a long-lost olive-bough,
And can discover even now
A heart that once could love.

TWENTY YEARS HENCE

(1846)

Twenty years hence my eyes may grow
If not quite dim, yet rather so,
Still yours from others they shall know
Twenty years hence.

Twenty years hence tho' it may hap
That I be call'd to take a nap
In a cool cell where thunder-clap
Was never heard,

There breathe but o'er my arch of grass
A not too sadly sigh'd *alas,*
And I, shall catch, ere you can pass
That wingèd word.

REMAIN, AH NOT IN YOUTH ALONE

(1846)

Remain, ah not in youth alone,
Tho' youth, where you are, long will stay,
But when my summer days are gone,
And my autumnal haste away.
"Can I be always by your side?"
No; but the hours you can, you must,
Nor rise at Death's approaching stride,
Nor go when dust is gone to dust.

"YOU MUST GIVE BACK," HER MOTHER SAID

(1846)

"You must give back," her mother said
To a poor sobbing little maid,
"All the young man has given you,
Hard as it now may seem to do."
"'Tis done already, mother dear!"
Said the sweet girl, "So, never fear."
Mother. Are you quite certain? Come, recount
(There was not much) the whole amount.
Girl. The locket: the kid gloves.
Mother. Go on.
Girl. Of the kid gloves I found but one.
Mother. Never mind that. What else? Proceed.
You gave back all his trash?
Girl. Indeed.
Mother. And was there nothing you would save?
Girl. Everything I could give I gave.
Mother. To the last tittle?
Girl. Even to that.
Mother. Freely?
Girl. My heart went *pit-a-pat*
At giving up—ah me! ah me!
I cry so I can hardly see—
All the fond looks and words that pass'd,
And all the kisses, to the last.

THE MAID I LOVE NE'ER THOUGHT OF ME

(1846)

The maid I love ne'er thought of me
Amid the scenes of gaiety;
But when her heart or mine sank low,
Ah then it was no longer so.
From the slant palm she rais'd her head,
And kiss'd the cheek whence youth had fled.
Angels! some future day for this,
Give her as sweet and pure a kiss.

TO A PAINTER

(1846)

Conceal not Time's misdeeds, but on my brow
Retrace his mark:
Let the retiring hair be silvery now
That once was dark:
Eyes that reflected images too bright
Let clouds o'ercast,
And from the tablet be abolish'd quite
The cheerful past.
Yet Care's deep lines should one from waken'd Mirth
Steal softly o'er,
Perhaps on me the fairest of the Earth
May glance once more.

DULL IS MY VERSE: NOT EVEN THOU

(1846)

Dull is my verse: not even thou
Who movest many cares away
From this lone breast and weary brow,
Canst make, as once, its fountain play;
No, nor those gentle words that now
Support my heart to hear thee say:
"The bird upon its lonely bough
Sings sweetest at the close of day."

WHY, WHY REPINE

(1846)

Why, why repine, my pensive friend,
At pleasures slipp'd away?
Some the stern Fates will never lend,
And all refuse to stay.

I see the rainbow in the sky,
The dew upon the grass,
I see them, and I ask not why
They glimmer or they pass.

With folded arms I linger not
To call them back; 'twere vain;
In this, or in some other spot,
I know they'll shine again.

PROUD WORD YOU NEVER SPOKE

(1846)

Proud word you never spoke, but you will speak
Four not exempt from pride some future day.
Resting on one white hand a warm wet cheek
Over my open volume you will say,
"This man loved *me!*" then rise and trip away.

ALAS, HOW SOON THE HOURS ARE OVER

(1846)

Alas, how soon the hours are over
Counted us out to play the lover!
And how much narrower is the stage
Allotted us to play the sage!
But when we play the fool, how wide,
The theatre expands! beside,
How long the audience sits before us!
How many prompters! what a chorus!

MY HOPES RETIRE

(1846)

My hopes retire; my wishes as before
Struggle to find their resting-place in vain;
The ebbing sea thus beats against the shore;
The shore repels it; it returns again.

VARIOUS THE ROADS OF LIFE

(1846)

Various the roads of life; in one
All terminate, one lonely way.
We go; and "Is he gone?"
Is all our best friends say.

IS IT NOT BETTER

(1846)

Is it not better at an early hour
In its calm cell to rest the weary head,
While birds are singing and while blooms the bower,
Than sit the fire out and go starv'd to bed?

I KNOW NOT WHETHER I AM PROUD

(1846)

I know not whether I am proud,
But this I know, I hate the crowd:
Therefore pray let me disengage
My verses from the motley page,
Where others far more sure to please
Pour out their choral song with ease.

And yet perhaps, if some should tire
With too much froth or too much fire,
There is an ear that may incline
Even to words so dull as mine.

HOW MANY VOICES GAILY SING

(1846)

How many voices gaily sing,
"O happy morn, O happy spring
Of life!" Meanwhile there comes o'er me
A softer voice from Memory,
And says, "If loves and hopes have flown
With years, think too what griefs are gone!"

TO ROBERT BROWNING

(1846)

There is delight in singing, tho' none hear
Beside the singer: and there is delight

In praising, tho' the praiser sit alone
And see the prais'd far off him, far above.
Shakespeare is not our poet, but the world's,
Therefore on him no speech! and brief for thee,
Browning! Since Chaucer was alive and hale,
No man hath walked along our roads with step
So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
So varied in discourse. But warmer climes
Give brighter plumage, stronger wing: the breeze
Of Alpine heights thou playest with, borne on
Beyond Sorrento and Amalfi, where
The Siren waits thee, singing song for song.

THRASYMEDES AND EUNOË

(1846)

Who will away to Athens with me? who
Loves choral songs and maidens crown'd with flowers,
Unenvious? mount the pinnace; hoist the sail.
I promise ye, as many as are here,
Ye shall not, while ye tarry with me, taste
From unrinsed barrel the diluted wine
Of a low vineyard or a plant ill-pruned,
But such as anciently the Ægean isles
Pour'd in libation at their solemn feasts:
And the same goblets shall ye grasp, embossed
With no vile figures of loose languid boors,
But such as gods have lived with and have led.
The sea smiles bright before us. What white sail
Plays yonder? What pursues it? Like two hawks
Away they fly. Let us away in time
To overtake them. Are they menaces
We hear? And shall the strong repulse the weak,
Enraged at her defender? Hippias!
Art thou the man? 'Twas Hippias. He had found
His sister borne from the Cecropian port
By Thrasymedes. And reluctantly?
Ask, ask the maiden; I have no reply.
"Brother! O brother Hippias! O, if love,
If pity, ever touch'd thy breast, forbear!
Strike not the brave, the gentle, the beloved,
My Thrasymedes, with his cloak alone
Protecting his own head and mine from harm."
"Didst thou not once before," cried Hippias,
Regardless of his sister, hoarse with wrath
At Thrasymedes, "didst not thou, dog-eyed,
Dare, as she walk'd up to the Parthenon,
On the most holy of all holy days,
In sight of all the city, dare to kiss
Her maiden cheek?"
"Ay, before all the gods,
Ay, before Pallas, before Artemis,
Ay, before Aphrodite, before Herè,
I dared; and dare again. Arise, my spouse!
Arise! and let my lips quaff purity
From thy fair open brow."
The sword was up,
And yet he kiss'd her twice. Some God withheld
The arm of Hippias; his proud blood seeth'd slower
And smote his breast less angrily; he laid
His hand on the white shoulder, and spake thus:
"Ye must return with me. A second time
Offended, will our sire Peisistratos
Pardon the affront? Thou shouldst have ask'd thyself
This question ere the sail first flapp'd the mast."
"Already thou hast taken life from me;
Put up thy sword," said the sad youth, his eyes
Sparkling; but whether love or rage or grief
They sparkled with, the Gods alone could see.
Piræus they re-entered, and their ship
Drove up the little waves against the quay,
Whence was thrown out a rope from one above,
And Hippias caught it. From the virgin's waist
Her lover dropped his arm, and blushed to think
He had retain'd it there in sight of rude
Irreverent men: he led her forth, nor spake.
Hippias walked silent too, until they reached

The mansion of Peisistratos her sire.
Serenely in his sternness did the prince
Look on them both awhile: they saw not him,
For both had cast their eyes upon the ground.
"Are these the pirates thou hast taken, son?"
Said he. "Worse, father! worse than pirates they,
Who thus abuse thy patience, thus abuse
Thy pardon, thus abuse the holy rites
Twice over."
"Well hast thou performed thy duty,"
Firmly and gravely said Peisistratos.
"Nothing then, rash young man! could turn thy heart
From Eunoë, my daughter?"
"Nothing, sir,
Shall ever turn it. I can die but once
And love but once. O Eunoë! farewell!"
"Nay, she shall see what thou canst bear for her."
"O father! shut me in my chamber, shut me
In my poor mother's tomb, dead or alive,
But never let me see what he can bear;
I know how much that is, when borne for me."
"Not yet: come on. And lag not thou behind,
Pirate of virgin and of princely hearts!
Before the people and before the Goddess
Thou hadst evinced the madness of thy passion,
And now wouldst bear from home and plenteousness
To poverty and exile this my child."
Then shuddered Thrasymedes, and exclaim'd,
"I see my crime; I saw it not before.
The daughter of Peisistratos was born
Neither for exile nor for poverty,
Ah! nor for me!" He would have wept, but one
Might see him, and weep worse. The prince unmoved
Strode on, and said, "To-morrow shall the people,
All who beheld thy trespasses, behold
The justice of Peisistratos, the love
He bears his daughter, and the reverence
In which he holds the highest law of God."
He spake; and on the morrow they were one.

IPHIGENEIA AND AGAMEMNON

(1846)

Iphigeneia, when she heard her doom
At Aulis, and when all beside the King
Had gone away, took his right hand, and said,
"O father! I am young and very happy.
I do not think the pious Calchas heard
Distinctly what the Goddess spake. Old age
Obscures the senses. If my nurse, who knew
My voice so well, sometimes misunderstood
While I was resting on her knee both arms
And hitting it to make her mind my words,
And looking in her face, and she in mine,
Might he not also hear one word amiss,
Spoken from so far off, even from Olympus?"
The father placed his cheek upon her head,
And tears dropped down it, but the king of men
Replied not. Then the maiden spake once more.
"O father! sayst thou nothing? Hear'st thou not
Me, whom thou ever hast, until this hour,
Listened to fondly, and awakened me
To hear my voice amid the voice of birds,
When it was inarticulate as theirs,
And the down deadened it within the nest?"
He moved her gently from him, silent still,
And this, and this alone, brought tears from her,
Although she saw fate nearer: then with sighs,
"I thought to have laid down my hair before
Benignant Artemis, and not have dimmed
Her polished altar with my virgin blood;
I thought to have selected the white flowers
To please the Nymphs, and to have asked of each
By name, and with no sorrowful regret,
Whether, since both my parents willed the change,
I might at Hymen's feet bend my clipped brow;
And (after those who mind us girls the most,)
Adore our own Athena, that she would
Regard me mildly with her azure eyes.

But father! to see you no more, and see
Your love, O father! go ere I am gone . . ."
Gently he moved her off, and drew her back,
Bending his lofty head far over hers,
And the dark depths of nature heaved and burst.
He turn'd away; not far, but silent still.
She now first shuddered; for in him, so nigh,
So long a silence seemed the approach of death,
And like it. Once again she raised her voice.
"O father! if the ships are now detained,
And all your vows move not the Gods above,
When the knife strikes me there will be one prayer
The less to them: and purer can there be
Any, or more fervent than the daughter's prayer
For her dear father's safety and success?"
A groan that shook him shook not his resolve
An aged man now entered, and without
One word, stepped slowly on, and took the wrist
Of the pale maiden. She looked up and saw
The fillet of the priest and calm cold eyes.
Then turned she where her parent stood, and cried
"O father! grieve no more: the ships can sail."

THE HAMADRYAD

(1846)

Rhaicos was born amid the hills where from
Gnidos the light of Caria is discern'd,
And small are the white-crested that play near,
And smaller onward are the purple waves.
Thence festal choirs were visible, all crown'd
With rose and myrtle if they were in-born;
If from Pandion sprang they, on the coast
Where stern Athenè raised her citadel,
Then olive was intwined with violets
Cluster'd in bosses, regular and large.
For various men wore various coronals;
But one was their devotion; 'twas to her
Whose laws all follow, her whose smile withdraws
The sword from Ares, thunderbolt from Zeus,
And whom in his chill caves the mutable
Of mind, Poseidon, the sea-king, reveres,
And whom his brother, stubborn Dis, hath pray'd
To turn in pity the averted cheek
Of her he bore away, with promises,
Nay, with loud oath before dread Styx itself,
To give her daily more and sweeter flowers
Than he made drop from her on Enna's dell.
Rhaicos was looking from his father's door
At the long trains that hastened to the town
From all the valleys, like bright rivulets
Gurgling with gladness, wave outrunning wave,
And thought it hard he might not also go
And offer up one prayer, and press one hand,
He knew not whose. The father call'd him in,
And said, "Son Rhaicos! those are idle games;
Long enough I have lived to find them so."
And ere he ended sighed; as old men do
Always, to think how idle such games are.
"I have not yet," thought Rhaicos in his heart,
And wanted proof.
"Suppose thou go and help
Echeion at the hill, to bark yon oak
And lop its branches off, before we delve
About the trunk and ply the root with axe:
This we may do in winter."
Rhaicos went;
For thence he could see farther, and see more
Of those who hurried to the city-gate.
Echeion he found there with naked arm
Swart-hair'd, strong-sinew'd, and his eyes intent
Upon the place where first the axe should fall:
He held it upright. "There are bees about,
Or wasps, or hornets," said the cautious eld,
"Look sharp, O son of Thallinos!" The youth

Inclined his ear, afar, and warily,
And cavern'd in his hand. He heard a buzz
At first, and then the sound grew soft and clear,
And then divided into what seem'd tune,
And there were words upon it, plaintive words.
He turn'd, and said, "Echeion! do not strike
That tree: it must be hollow; for some god
Speaks from within. Come thyself near." Again
Both turn'd toward it: and behold! there sat
Upon the moss below, with her two palms
Pressing it, on each side, a maid in form.
Downcast were her long eyelashes, and pale
Her cheek, but never mountain-ash display'd
Berries of color like her lip so pure,
Nor were the anemones about her hair
Soft, smooth and wavering like the face beneath.
"What dost thou here?" Echeion, half-afraid,
Half-angry cried. She lifted up her eyes,
But nothing spake she. Rhaicos drew one step
Backward, for fear came likewise over him,
But not such fear: he panted, gasp'd, drew in
His breath, and would have turn'd it into words,
But could not into one.
"O send away
That sad old man!" said she. The old man went
Without a warning from his master's son,
Glad to escape, for sorely he now fear'd,
And the axe shone behind him in their eyes.
Hamad. And wouldst thou too shed the most innocent
Of blood? No vow demands it; no god wills
The oak to bleed.
Rhaicos. Who art thou? whence? why here?
And whither wouldst thou go? Among the robed
In white or saffron, or the hue that most
Resembles dawn or the clear sky, is none
Array'd as thou art. What so beautiful
As that gray robe which clings about thee close,
Like moss to stones adhering, leaves to trees,
Yet lets thy bosom rise and fall in turn,
As, touch'd by zephyrs, fall and rise the boughs
Of graceful platan by the river-side?
Hamad. Lovest thou well thy father's house?
Rhaicos. Indeed
I love it, well I love it, yet would leave
For thine, where'er it be, my father's house,
With all the marks upon the door, that show
My growth at every birthday since the third,
And all the charms, o'erpowering evil eyes,
My mother nail'd for me against my bed,
And the Cydonian bow (which thou shalt see)
Won in my race last spring from Eutychos.
Hamad. Bethink thee what it is to leave a home
Thou never yet hast left, one night, one day.
Rhaicos. No, 'tis not hard to leave it; 'tis not hard
To leave, O maiden, that paternal home,
If there be one on earth whom we may love
First, last, for ever; one who says that she
Will love for ever too. To say which word,
Only to say it, surely is enough . . .
It shows such kindness . . . if 'twere possible
We at the moment think she would indeed.
Hamad. Who taught thee all this folly at thy age?
Rhaicos. I have seen lovers and have learned to love.
Hamad. But wilt thou spare the tree?
Rhaicos. My father wants
The bark; the tree may hold its place awhile.
Hamad. Awhile! thy father numbers then my days?
Rhaicos. Are there no others where the moss beneath
Is quite as tufty? Who would send thee forth
Or ask thee why thou tarriest? Is thy flock
Anywhere near?

Hamad. I have no flock: I kill
Nothing that breathes, that stirs, that feels the air,
The sun, the dew. Why should the beautiful
(And thou art beautiful) disturb the source
Whence springs all beauty? Hast thou never heard
Of Hamadryads?
Rhaicos. Heard of them I have:
Tell me some tale about them. May I sit
Beside thy feet? Art thou not tired? The herbs
Are very soft; I will not come too nigh;
Do but sit there, nor tremble so, nor doubt.
Stay, stay an instant: let me first explore
If any acorn of last year be left
Within it; thy thin robe too ill protects
Thy dainty limbs against the harm one small
Acorn may do. Here's none. Another day
Trust me; till then let me sit opposite.
Hamad. I seat me; be thou seated, and content.
Rhaicos. O sight for gods! ye men below! adore
The Aphroditè. *Is* she there below?
Or sits she here before me? as she sate
Before the shepherd on those heights that shade
The Hellespont, and brought his kindred woe
Hamad. Reverence the higher Powers; nor deem amiss
Of her who pleads to thee, and would repay—
Ask not how much—but very much. Rise not;
No, Rhaicos, no! Without the nuptial vow
Love is unholy. Swear to me that none
Of mortal maids shall ever taste thy kiss,
Then take thou mine; then take it, not before.
Rhaicos. Hearken, all gods above! O Aphroditè!
O Herè! Let my vow be ratified!
But wilt thou come into my father's house?
Hamad. Nay: and of mine I cannot give thee part.
Rhaicos. Where is it?
Hamad. In this oak.
Rhaicos. Ay; now begins
The tale of Hamadryad; tell it through.
Hamad. Pray of thy father never to cut down
My tree; and promise him, as well thou mayst,
That every year he shall receive from me
More honey than will buy him nine fat sheep,
More wax than he will burn to all the gods.
Why fallest thou upon thy face? Some thorn
May scratch it, rash young man! Rise up; for shame!
Rhaicos. For shame I can not rise. O pity me!
I dare not sue for love . . . but do not hate!
Let me once more behold thee . . . not once more
But many days: let me love on . . . unloved!
I aimed too high: on my head the bolt
Falls back, and pierces to the very brain.
Hamad. Go . . . rather go, than make me say I love.
Rhaicos. If happiness is immortality,
(And whence enjoy it else the gods above?)
I am immortal too: my vow is heard:
Hark! on the left . . . Nay, turn not from me now,
I claim my kiss.
Hamad. Do men take first, then claim?
Do thus the seasons run their course with them?

Her lips were seal'd, her head sank on his breast.
'Tis said that laughs were heard within the wood:
But who should hear them? . . . and whose laughs? and why?
Savory was the smell, and long past noon,
Thallinos! in thy house: for marjoram,
Basil and mint, and thyme and rosemary,
Were sprinkled on the kid's well roasted length,
Awaiting Rhaicos. Home he came at last,
Not hungry, but pretending hunger keen,
With head and eyes just o'er the maple plate.
"Thou seest but badly, coming from the sun,
Boy Rhaicos!" said the father. "That oak's bark

Must have been tough, with little sap between;
It ought to run; but it and I are old."
Rhaicos, although each morsel of the bread
Increased by chewing, and the meat grew cold
And tasteless to his palate, took a draught
Of gold-bright wine, which, thirsty as he was,
He thought not of until his father fill'd
The cup, averring water was amiss,
But wine had been at all times pour'd on kid,
It was religion. He thus fortified
Said, not quite boldly, and not quite abashed,
"Father, that oak is Zeus's own; that oak
Year after year will bring thee wealth from wax
And honey. There is one who fears the gods
And the gods love—that one" (He blush'd, nor said
What one) "has promised this, and may do more.
Thou hast not many moons to wait until
The bees have done their best; if then there come
Nor wax nor honey, let the tree be hewn."
"Zeus hath bestow'd on thee a prudent mind,"
Said the glad sire: "but look thou often there,
And gather all the honey thou canst find
In every crevice, over and above
What has been promised; would they reckon that?"
Rhaicos went daily; but the nymph as oft,
Invisible. To play at love, she knew,
Stopping its breathings when it breathes most soft,
Is sweeter than to play on any pipe.
She play'd on his: she fed upon his sighs;
They pleased her when they gently waved her hair,
Cooling the pulses of her purple veins,
And when her absence brought them out, they pleased.
Even among the fondest of them all,
What mortal or immortal maid is more
Content with giving happiness than pain?
One day he was returning from the wood
Despondently. She pitied him, and said
"Come back!" and twined her fingers in the hem
Above his shoulder. Then she led his steps
To a cool rill than ran o'er level sand
Through lentisk and through oleander, there
Bathed she his feet, lifting them on her lap
When bathed, and drying them in both her hands.
He dared complain; for those who most are loved
Most dare it; but not harsh was his complaint.
"O thou inconstant!" said he, "if stern law
Bind thee, or will, stronger than sternest law
O, let me know henceforward when to hope
The fruit of love that grows for me but here."
He spake; and pluck'd it from its pliant stem.
"Impatient Rhaicos! Why thus intercept
The answer I would give? There is a bee
Whom I have fed, a bee who knows my thoughts
And executes my wishes: I will send
That messenger. If ever thou art false,
Drawn by another, own it not, but drive
My bee away; then shall I know my fate,
And—for thou must be wretched—weep at thine.
But often as my heart persuades to lay
Its cares on thine and throb itself to rest,
Expect her with thee, whether it be morn
Or eve, at any time when woods are safe."
Day after day the Hours beheld them blessed,
And season after season: years had past,
Blessed were they still. He who asserts that Love
Ever is sated of sweet things the same
Sweet things he fretted for in earlier days,
Never, by Zeus! loved he a Hamadryad.
The nights had now grown longer, and perhaps
The Hamadryads find them lone and dull
Among their woods; one did, alas! She called
Her faithful bee: 't was when all bees should sleep,
And all did sleep but hers. She was sent forth
To bring that light which never wintry blast
Blows out, nor rain nor snow extinguishes,
The light that shines from loving eyes upon
Eyes that love back, till they can see no more.

Rhaicos was sitting at his father's hearth:
Between them stood the table, not o'erspread
With fruits which autumn now profusely bore,
Nor anise cakes, nor odorous wine; but there
The draft-board was expanded; at which game
Triumphant sat old Thallinos; the son
Was puzzled, vexed, discomfited, distraught.
A buzz was at his ear: up went his hand,
And it was heard no longer. The poor bee
Return'd, (but not until the morn shone bright)
And found the Hamadryad with her head
Upon her aching wrist, and showed one wing
Half-broken off, the other's meshes marr'd,
And there were bruises which no eye could see
Saving a Hamadryad's.
At this sight
Down fell the languid brow, both hands fell down,
A shriek was carried to the ancient hall
Of Thallinos: he heard it not: his son
Heard it, and ran forthwith into the wood.
No bark was on the tree, no leaf was green,
The trunk was riven through. From that day forth
Nor word nor whisper sooth'd his ear, nor sound
Even of insect wing; but loud laments
The woodmen and the shepherds one long year
Heard day and night; for Rhaicos would not quit
The solitary place, but moan'd and died.

Hence milk and honey wonder not, O guest,
To find set duly on the hollow stone.

HYPERBION

(1847)

Hyperbion was among the chosen few
Of Phœbus; and men honored him awhile,
Honoring in him the God. But others sang
As loudly; and the boys as loudly cheer'd.
Hyperbion (more than bard should be) was wroth,
And thus he spake to Phœbus: "Hearest thou,
O Phœbus! the rude rabble from the field,
Who swear that they have known thee ever since
Thou feddest for Admetus his white bull?"
"I hear them," said the God. "Seize thou the first,
And haul him up above the heads of men,
And thou shalt hear them shout for thee as pleas'd."
Headstrong and proud Hyperbion was: the crown
Of laurel on it badly cool'd his brow:
So, when he heard them singing at his gate,
While some with flints cut there the rival's name,
Rushing he seized the songster at their head:
The songster kickt and struggled hard, in vain.
Hyperbion claspt him round with arm robust,
And with the left a hempen rope uncoil'd,
Whereon already was a noose: it held
The calf until its mother's teat was drawn
At morn and eve; and both were now afield.
With all his strength he pull'd the wretch along,
And haul'd him up a pine-tree, where he died.
But one night, not long after, in his sleep
He saw the songster: then did he beseech
Apollo to enlighten him, if perchance
In what he did he had done aught amiss.
"Thou hast done well, Hyperbion!" said the God,
"As I did also to one Marsyas
Some years ere thou wert born: but better 'twere
If thou hadst understood my words aright,
For those around may harm thee, and assign
As reason that thou wentest past the law.
My meaning was that thou shouldst hold him up
In the high places of thy mind, and show
Thyself the greater by enduring him."
Downcast Hyperbion stood: but Phœbus said:
"Be of good cheer, Hyperbion! if the rope
Is not so frayed but it may hold thy calf,
The greatest harm is, that, by hauling him,
Thou hast chafed, sorely, sorely, that old pine;
And pine-tree bark will never close again."

SHAKESPEARE AND MILTON

(1853)

The tongue of England, that which myriads
Have spoken and will speak, were paralyzed
Hereafter, but two mighty men stand forth
Above the flight of ages, two alone;
One crying out,
All nations spoke thro' me.
The other:
True; and thro' this trumpet burst
God's word; the fall of Angels, and the doom
First of immortal, then of mortal, Man.
Glory! be glory! not to me, to God.

THERE FALLS WITH EVERY WEDDING CHIME

(1853)

There falls with every wedding chime
A feather from the wing of Time.
You pick it up, and say "How fair
To look upon its colors are!"
Another drops day after day
Unheeded; not one word you say.
When bright and dusky are blown past,
Upon the hearse there nods the last.

BLYTHE BELL THAT CALLS

(1853)

Blythe bell, that calls to bridal halls,
Tolls deep a darker day;
The very shower that feeds the flower
Weeps also its decay.

AN OLD MAN TO A YOUNG GIRL

(1853)

I saw the arrow quit the bow
To lay thy soaring spirits low,
And warn'd thee long ere now;
For this thou shunnest me, for this
No more the leap to catch the kiss
Upon thy calm clear brow.

I pitied thee, well knowing why
The broken song, the book thrown by,
And Fido's foot put down,
Who looks so sorrowing all the while,
To hear no name, to hope no smile,
To fear almost a frown.

Lovers who see thy drooping head
In lover's phrase have often said,
"The lily drives the rose
In shame away from that sweet face,
Yet shall she soon regain her place
And fresher bloom disclose."

Show them, show one above the rest,
A lily's petals idly prest
Are firm as they are pure;
Those which but once have given way
Stand up erect no second day,
No gentlest touch endure.

THERE WAS A LOVELY TREE I KNEW

(1853)

There was a lovely tree, I knew
And well remember where it grew,
And very often felt inclined
To hear its whispers in the wind.
One evening of a summer day
I went, without a thought, that way,
And, sitting down, I seem'd to hear
The tree's soft voice, and some one's near.
Yes, sure enough I saw a maid
With wakeful ear against it laid.
Silent was everything around
While thus the tree in quivering sound:
"They pant to cull our fruit, and take
A leaf, they tell us, for our sake,
On the most faithful breast, to wear
And keep it, till both perish, there.
Sad pity such kind hearts should pant
So hard! We give them all they want.
They come soon after and just taste
The fruit, and throw it on the waste.
Again they come, and then pluck off
What poets call our hair, and scoff;
And long ere winter you may see
These leaves fall fluttering round the tree.
They come once more: then, then you find
The root cut round and undermined:
Chains are clencht round it: that fine head,
On which still finer words were said,
Serves only to assist the blow
And lend them aid to lay it low."
Methinks I hear a gentle sigh,
And fain would guess the reason why;
It may have been for what was said
Of fruit and leaves, of root and head.

TO AGE

(1853)

Welcome, old friend! These many years
Have we lived door by door:
The Fates have laid aside their shears
Perhaps for some few more.

I was indocile at an age
When better boys were taught,
But thou at length hast made me sage,
If I am sage in aught.

Little I know from other men,
Too little they from me,
But thou hast pointed well the pen
That writes these lines to thee.

Thanks for expelling Fear and Hope,
One vile, the other vain;
One's scourge, the other's telescope,
I shall not see again:

Rather what lies before my feet
My notice shall engage—
He who hath braved Youth's dizzy heat
Dreads not the frost of Age.

THE CHRYSOLITES AND RUBIES BACCHUS BRINGS

(1853)

The chrysolites and rubies Bacchus brings
To crown the feast where swells the broad-vein'd brow,
Where maidens blush at what the minstrel sings,
They who have coveted may covet now.

Bring me, in cool alcove, the grape uncrushed,
The peach of pulpy cheek and down mature,
Where every voice (but bird's or child's) is hushed,
And every thought, like the brook nigh, runs pure.

YEARS, MANY PARTI-COLORED YEARS

(1853)

Years, many parti-colored years,
Some have crept on, and some have flown
Since first before me fell those tears
I never could see fall alone.
Years, not so many, are to come,
Years not so varied, when from you
One more will fall: when, carried home,
I see it not, nor hear *adieu*.

I WONDER NOT THAT YOUTH REMAINS

(1853)

I wonder not that Youth remains
With you, wherever else she flies:
Where could she find such fair domains,
Where bask beneath such sunny eyes?

ROSE AYLMER'S HAIR, GIVEN BY HER SISTER

(1853)

Beautiful spoils! borne off from vanquished death!
Upon my heart's high altar shall ye lie,
Moved but by only one adorer's breath,
Retaining youth, rewarding constancy.

DEATH STANDS ABOVE ME

(1853)

Death stands above me, whispering low
I know not what into my ear:
Of his strange language all I know
Is, there is not a word of fear.

ON HIS SEVENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

(*1850*–1853)

I strove with none; for none was worth my strife,
Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life,
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

UNDER THE LINDENS

(1858)

Under the lindens lately sat
A couple, and no more, in chat;
I wondered what they would be at
Under the lindens.

I saw four eyes and four lips meet,
I heard the words, *How sweet! how sweet!*
Had then the Faeries given a treat
Under the lindens?

I pondered long and could not tell
What dainty pleased them both so well:
Bees! bees! was it your hydromel
Under the lindens?

ROSINA

(1858)

Rosina ran down Prior-park,
Joyous and buoyant as a lark.
The little girl, light-heel'd, light hearted,
Challenged me; and away we started.
Soon in a flutter she return'd,
And cheek, and brow, and bosom burn'd.
She fairly own'd my full success
In catching her, she could no less,
And said to her mama, who smiled
Yet lovelier on her lovely child,
"You can not think how fast he ran
For such a very old old man,
He would not kiss me when he might,
And, catching me, he had a right.
Such modesty I never knew,
He would no more kiss me than you."

COMMINATION

(1858)

Taking my walk the other day
I saw a little girl at play,
So pretty, 'twould not be amiss,
Thought I, to venture on a kiss.
Fiercely the little girl began . . .
"I wonder at you, nasty man!"
And all four fingers were applied,
And crimson pinafore beside,
To wipe what venom might remain.
"Do, if you dare, the like again;
"I have a mind to teach you better."
And I too had a mind to let her.

ON SOUTHEY'S DEATH

(1858)

Friends! hear the words my wandering thoughts would say,
And cast them into shape some other day.
Southey, my friend of forty years, is gone,
And, shattered by the fall, I stand alone.

THE THREE ROSES

(1858)

When the buds began to burst,
Long ago, with Rose the First,[1]
I was walking; joyous then
Far above all other men,
Till before us up there stood
Britonferry's oaken wood,
Whispering, *"Happy as thou art,*
Happiness and thou must part."
Many summers have gone by
Since a Second Rose and I
(Rose from that same stem) have told
This and other tales of old.
She upon her wedding-day
Carried home my tenderest lay:[2]
From her lap I now have heard
Gleeful, chirping, Rose the Third,
Not for *her* this hand of mine
Rhyme with nuptial wreath shall twine;
Cold and torpid it must lie,
Mute the tongue and closed the eye.

AN AGED MAN WHO LOVED TO DOZE AWAY

(1863)

An aged man who loved to doze away
An hour by daylight, for his eyes were dim,
And he had seen too many suns go down
And rise again, dreamed that he saw two forms
Of radiant beauty; he would clasp them both,
But both flew stealthily away. He cried
In his wild dream,
"I never thought, O youth,
That thou, altho' so cherished, would'st return,
But I did think that he who came with thee,
Love, who could swear more sweetly than birds sing,
Would never leave me comfortless and lone."
A sigh broke through his slumber, not the last.

1 Rose Aylmer.
2 Landor's poem "To a Bride," see p. 109.

WELL I REMEMBER HOW YOU SMILED

(1863)

Well I remember how you smiled
To see me write your name upon
The soft sea-sand. *"O! what a child!*
You think you're writing upon stone!"
I have since written what no tides
Shall ever wash away, what men
Unborn shall read o'er ocean wide
And find Ianthe's name again.

PAN

(1863)

Pan led me to a wood the other day,
Then, bending both hoofs under him, where moss
Was softest and where highest was the tuft,
Said he, "sit thou aside me; there is room
Just for us two; the tinklers are below
To catch the little birds and butterflies,
Nor see us nor would heed us if they saw.
I minded thee in Sicily with one
I dearly love; I heard thee tell my loss
Of Pitys;[1] and he swore that none but thou
Could thus contend with him, or ever should.
Though others had loud lyres and struck them well,
Few could bring any harmony from reeds
By me held high, and higher since thou hast breath'd
Thy gentle breath o'er Pitys and her Pan."

SO SAD A MOURNER NEVER BENT

(1863)

So sad a mourner never bent
Against a marble monument
As, poorest of the paupers, she
On the damp grass who bends the knee
O'er her one lost; her words are few,
What shall I do! what shall I do!
Are all she says, but those aloud,
And pity moves the silent crowd.
She rises . . . she must carry back
The lent and oft darn'd gown of black.

[1] In Landor's poem "Pan and Pitys" in the "Hellenics."

FRIENDS

(1863)

The heaviest curse that can on mortal fall
Is "who has friends may he outlive them all!"
This malediction has awaited me
Who had so many . . . I could once count three.

WE MAY REPAIR

(1863)

We may repair and fix again
A shatter'd or a broken pane,
Not friendship so: it lies beyond
Man's wit to pierce a diamond.

FOR A GRAVESTONE IN SPAIN

(1863)

Say thou who liest here beneath,
To fall in battle is not death.
You, though no pall on you was cast,
Heard the first trump nor fear'd the last.

TO MY NINTH DECADE

(1863)

To my ninth decade I have totter'd on,
And no soft arm bends now my steps to steady;
She, who once led me where she would, is gone,
So when he calls me, Death shall find me ready.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING (1806-1861)

COWPER'S GRAVE

(1838)

I

It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's decaying.
It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their praying.
Yet let the grief and humbleness, as low as silence, languish.
Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave her anguish.

II

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless singing!
O Christians, at your cross of hope, a hopeless hand was clinging!
O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths beguiling,
Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye were smiling!

III

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming tears his story,
How discord on the music fell, and darkness on the glory,
And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and wandering lights departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted,

IV

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration.
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken,
Named softly as the household name of one whom God hath taken.

V

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon him,—
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose heaven hath won him,
Who suffered once the madness-cloud to His own love to blind him,
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird could find him,

VI

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick poetic senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious influences.
The pulse of dew upon the grass, kept his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a slumber.

VII

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share his home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses.
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside him, true and loving.

VIII

And though, in blindness, he remained unconscious of that guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense of providing,
He testified this solemn truth, while phrenzy desolated,
—Nor man nor nature satisfy whom only God created.

IX

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she blesses
And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her kisses,—

That turns his fevered eyes around—"My mother! where's my mother?"—
As if such tender words and deeds could come from any other!—

X

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending o'er him,
Her face all pale from watchful love, the unweary love she bore him!—
Thus, woke the poet from the dream his life's long fever gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes, which closed in death to save him.

XI

Thus? oh, not *thus!* no type of earth can image that awaking,
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round him breaking,
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted,
But felt those eyes alone, and knew,—"*My* Saviour! *not* deserted!"

XII

Deserted! Who hath dreamt that when the cross in darkness rested,
Upon the Victim's hidden face, no love was manifested?
What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning drops averted?
What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one* should be deserted?

XIII

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence rather;
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son and Father.
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry his universe hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, "My God, I am forsaken!"

XIV

It went up from the Holy's lips amid his lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation!
That earth's worst phrenzies, marring hope, should mar not hope's fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a vision.

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

(1843[1]–1844)

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in their sorrow
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy;
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary,
Our young feet," they say, "are very weak;
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:

1 In *Blackwood's Magazine.*

Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.

"True," say the children, "it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries;
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes:
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime.
It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have:
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty.
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
Through the coal-dark, underground;
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

"For all day the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places:
Turns the sky in the high window, blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling:
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels' (breaking out in a mad moaning),
'Stop! be silent for to-day!' "

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray;
So the blessèd One who blesseth all the others,

Will bless them another day.
They answer, "Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door.
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And at midnight's hour of harm,
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.
We know no other words except 'Our Father,'
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But, no!" say the children, weeping faster,
"He is speechless as a stone:
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children,—"up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailèd heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath."

THE POET AND THE BIRD

A FABLE

(1844)

I

Said a people to a poet—"Go out from among us straightway!
While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine.
There's a little fair brown nightingale, who, sitting in the gateway,

Makes fitter music to our ear, than any
song of thine!"

II

The poet went out weeping—the nightin-
gale ceased chanting,
"Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is
all thy sweetness done?"
—"I cannot sing my earthly things, the
heavenly poet wanting,
Whose highest harmony includes the
lowest under sun."

III

The poet went out weeping,—and died
abroad, bereft there.
The bird flew to his grave and died amid
a thousand wails.
And, when I last came by the place, I swear
the music left there
Was only of the poet's song, and not the
nightingale's.

CONFESSIONS

(1850)

I

Face to face in my chamber, my silent
chamber I saw her.
God and she and I only, . . . there, I sate
down to draw her
Soul through the clefts of confession. . . .
Speak, I am holding thee fast,
As the angels of resurrection shall do at
the last.
"My cup is blood-red
With my sin," she said,
"And I pour it out to the bitter lees,
As if the angels of judgment stood over
me strong at the last,
Or as thou wert as these!"

II

When God smote His hands together, and
struck out thy soul as a spark
Into the organised glory of things, from
deeps of the dark,—
Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn, didst
thou honor the power in the form,
As the star does at night, or the fire-fly, or
even the little ground-worm?
"I have sinned," she said,
"For my seed-light shed
Has smouldered away from His first
decrees!
The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the
ground-leaf praiseth the worm,—
I am viler than these!"

III

When God on that sin had pity, and did not
trample thee straight
With His wild rains beating and drenching
thy light found inadequate;
When He only sent thee the north-winds, a
little searching and chill,
To quicken thy flame . . . didst thou kin-
dle and flash to the heights of His will?
"I have sinned," she said,
"Unquickened, unspread
My fire dropt down, and I wept on my
knees!
I only said of His winds of the north as
I shrank from their chill, ...
What delight is in these?"

IV

When God on that sin had pity, and did
not meet it as such,
But tempered the wind to thy uses, and
softened the world to thy touch,
At least thou wast moved in thy soul,
though unable to prove it afar,
Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel,
not giving it out like a star?
"I have sinned," she said,
"And not merited
The gift He gives, by the grace He sees!
The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the hill-
side praiseth the star;
I am viler than these."

V

Then I cried aloud in my passion, . . .
Unthankful and impotent creature,
To throw up thy scorn unto God through
the rents in thy beggarly nature!
If He, the all-giving and loving, is served
so unduly, what then
Hast thou done to the weak and the false,
and the changing, . . . thy fellows of
men?
"I have *loved*," she said,
(Words bowing her head
As the wind the wet acacia-trees!)

"I saw God sitting above me,—but I . . .
I sate among men,
And I have loved these."

VI

Again with a lifted voice, like a choral trumpet that takes
The lowest note of a viol that trembles, and triumphing breaks
On the air with it solemn and clear,—"Behold! I have sinned not in this!
Where I loved, I have loved much and well,
—I have verily loved not amiss.
Let the living," she said,
"Enquire of the Dead,
In the house of the pale-fronted Images:
My own true dead will answer for me, that
I have not loved amiss
In my love for all these.

VII

"The least touch of their hands in the morning, I keep it by day and by night.
Their least step on the stair, at the door, still throbs through me, if ever so light.
Their least gift, which they left to my childhood, far off, in the long-ago years,
Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and seen through the crystals of tears.
Dig the snow," she said,
"For my churchyard bed,
Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,
If one only of these my belovèds, shall love me with heart-warm tears,
As I have loved these!

VIII

"If I angered any among them, from thenceforth my own life was sore.
If I fell by chance from their presence, I clung to their memory more.
Their tender I often felt holy, their bitter I sometimes called sweet;
And whenever their heart has refused me, I fell down straight at their feet.
I have loved," she said,—
"Man is weak, God is dread,
Yet the weak man dies with his spirit at ease,
Having poured such an unguent of love but once on the Saviour's feet,
As I lavished for these."

IX

Go, I cried, thou hast chosen the Human, and left the Divine!
Then, at least, have the Human shared with thee their wild berry-wine?
Have they loved back thy love, and when strangers approached thee with blame,
Have they covered thy fault with their kisses, and loved thee the same?
But she shrunk and said,
"God, over my head,
Must sweep in the wrath of his judgment seas,
If *He* shall deal with me sinning, but only indeed the same
And no gentler than these."

THE MASK

(1850)

I

I have a smiling face, she said,
I have a jest for all I meet,
I have a garland for my head
And all its flowers are sweet,—
And so you call me gay, she said.

II

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
And Wrong did teach this jesting bold.
These flowers were plucked from garden-bed
While a death-chime was tolled.
And what now will you say?—she said.

III

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
Live captives so uncomforted,
As souls behind a smile.
God's pity let us pray, she said.

IV

I know my face is bright, she said,—
Such brightness dying suns diffuse.
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,—
The ending of my day, she said.

V

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth,—
It were the happier way, she said.

VI

And since that must not be, she said,
I fain your bitter world would leave.
How calmly, calmly, smile the Dead,
Who do not, therefore, grieve!
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

VII

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear.
'Tis bought with pangs long nourishèd,
And rounded to despair.
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

VIII

Ye weep for those who weep? she said—
Ah fools! I bid you pass them by.
Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled,
What time their eyes were dry.
Whom sadder can I say? she said.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

(1847–1850)

I

I thought once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,—
"Guess now who holds thee?"—"Death," I said. But, there,
The silver answer rang,—"Not Death, but Love."

II

But only three in all God's universe
Have heard this word thou hast said,—Himself, beside
Thee speaking, and me listening! and replied
One of us . . . *that* was God, . . . and laid the curse
So darkly on my eyelids, as to amerce
My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,
The deathweights, placed there, would have signified
Less absolute exclusion. "Nay" is worse
From God than from all others, O my friend!
Men could not part us with their worldly jars,
Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend;
Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars:
And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another, as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to play thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?
The chrism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV

Thou hast thy calling to some palace-floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems! where

The dancers will break footing, from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush, call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . . alone, aloof.

V

I lift my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
Through the ashen grayness. If thy foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if instead
Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
The gray dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,
O my Beloved, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
The hair beneath. Stand farther off then! go.

VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forbore—
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

VII

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
And this . . . this lute and song . . . loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only dear
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII

What can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, who hast brought the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,
And laid them on the outside of the wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so; not cold,—but very poor instead.
Ask God who knows. For frequent tears have run
The colors from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

IX

Can it be right to give what I can give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
So to be lovers; and I own, and grieve

That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X

Yet love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,
Let temple burn, or flax; an equal light
Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed:
And love is fire. And when I say at need
I love thee . . . mark! . . . *I love thee*—in thy sight
I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
With conscience of the new rays that proceed
Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI

And therefore if to love can be desert,
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—
This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale
A melancholy music,—why advert
To these things? O Belovèd, it is plain
I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!
And yet, because I love thee, I obtain
From that same love this vindicating grace,
To live on still in love, and yet in vain,—
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

XII

Indeed this very love which is my boast,
And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
To draw men's eyes and prove the inner cost,—
This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
I should not love withal, unless that thou
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed,
And love called love. And thus, I cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my own;
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
And that I love (O soul, we must be meek!)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII

And wilt thou have me fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
Between our faces, to cast light on each?—
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself—me—that I should bring thee proof
In words, of love hid in me out of reach,
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—

A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

XV

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I wear
Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;
For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.
On me thou lookest with no doubting care,
As on a bee shut in a crystalline;
Since sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,
And to spread wing and fly in the outer air
Were most impossible failure, if I strove
To fail so. But I look on thee—on thee—
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
Hearing oblivion beyond memory;
As one who sits and gazes from above,
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI

And yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
Too close against thine heart henceforth to know
How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward, as in crushing low!
And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,
Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. *If* thou invite me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XVII

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
God set between His After and Before,
And strike up and strike off the general roar
Of the rushing worlds a melody that floats
In a serene air purely. Antidotes
Of medicated music, answering for
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine.
How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
A hope, to sing by gladly? or a fine
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?
A shade, in which to sing—of palm or pine?
A grave, on which to rest from singing? Choose.

XVIII

I never gave a lock of hair away
To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully,
I ring out to the full brown length and say
"Take it." My day of youth went yesterday:
My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
As girls do, any more; it only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks the mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
Would take this first, but love is justified,—
Take it thou, finding pure, from all those years,
The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX

The soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;
I barter curl for curl upon that mart,
And from my poet's forehead to my heart
Receive this lock which outweighs argosies,—
As purply black, as erst to Pindar's eyes
The dim purpureal tresses gloomed athwart
The nine white Muse-brows. For this counterpart,

The bay-crown's shade, Belovèd, I surmise,
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,
I tie the shadows safe from gliding back,
And lay the gift where nothing hindereth;
Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to lack
No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

XX

Belovèd, my Belovèd, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year ago,
What time I sat alone here in the snow
And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
No moment at thy voice, but, link by link,
Went counting all my chains as if that so
They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand,—why, thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXI

Say over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem "a cuckoo-song," as thou dost treat it,
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
Cry, "Speak once more—thou lovest!" Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence with thy soul.

XXII

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curvèd point,—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXIII

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?
And would the sun for thee more coldly shine
Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
I marvelled, my Belovèd, when I read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
But . . . *so* much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range.
Then, love me, Love! look on me—breathe on me!
As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
For love, to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
My near sweet view of Heaven, for earth with thee!

XXIV

Let the world's sharpness, like a clasping knife,
Shut in upon itself and do no harm
In this close hand of Love, now soft and warm.
And let us hear no sound of human strife
After the click of the shutting. Life to life—

I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm
Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots, accessible
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer,
Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.
God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXV

A heavy heart, Belovèd, have I borne
From year to year until I saw thy face,
And sorrow after sorrow took the place
Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
As the stringed pearls, each lifted in its turn
By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace
Were changed to long despairs, till God's own grace
Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid me bring
And let it drop adown thy calmly great
Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
Which its own nature doth precipitate,
While thine doth close above it, mediating
Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI

I lived with visions for my company
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not free
Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come—to be,
Belovèd, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendors (better, yet the same,
As river-water hallowed into fonts),
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
My soul with satisfaction of all wants:
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

XXVII

My own Belovèd, who hast lifted me.
From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
And, in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
Shines out again, as all the angels see,
Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
Who camest to me when the world was gone,
And I who looked for only God, found *thee!*
I find thee; I am safe, and strong, and glad.
As one who stands in dewless asphodel
Looks backward on the tedious time he had
In the upper life,—so I, with bosom-swell,
Make witness, here, between the good and bad,
That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVIII

My letters! all dead paper, mute and white!
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose the string
And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
This said,—he wished to have me in his sight
Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a simple thing,
Yet I wept for it!—this, . . . the paper's light . . .
Said, *Dear, I love thee;* and I sank and quailed
As if God's future thundered on my past,
This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has paled
With lying at my heart that beat too fast.
And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill availed
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

XXIX

I think of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud

About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
Put out broad leaves, and soon there's nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better! Rather, instantly
Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee
Drop heavily down,—burst, shattered, everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

XXX

I see thine image through my tears to-night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How
Refer the cause?—Belovèd, is it thou
Or I, who makes me sad? The acolyte
Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite
May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow,
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's Amen.
Belovèd, dost thou love? or did I see all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal,
For my soul's eyes? Will that light come again,
As now these tears come—falling hot and real?

XXXI

Thou comest! all is said without a word.
I sit beneath thy looks as children do
In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble through
Their happy eyelids from an unaverred
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue
The sin most, but the occasion—that we two
Should for a moment stand unministered
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,
Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears would rise,
With thy broad heart serenely interpose:
Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies
These thoughts which tremble when bereft of those,
Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII

The first time that the sun rose on thine oath
To love me, I looked forward to the moon
To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe;
And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
For such man's love;—more like an out-of-tune
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may float
'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced,—
And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.

XXXIII

Yes, call me by my pet-name! let me hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cowslips piled,
To glance up in some face that proved me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
Fond voices which, being drawn and reconciled
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While I call God—call God!—So let thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exanimate.
Gather the north flowers to complete the south.
And catch the early love up in the late.
Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,

With the same heart, will answer and not wait.

XXXIV

With the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee
As those, when thou shalt call me by my name—
Lo, the vain promise! is the same, the same,
Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?
When called before, I told how hastily
I dropped my flowers or brake off from a game,
To run and answer with the smile that came
At play last moment, and went on with me
Through my obedience. When I answer now,
I drop a grave thought, break from solitude;
Yet still my heart goes to thee—ponder how—
Not as to a single good, but all my good!
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And be all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors, another home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried,
To conquer grief, tries more, as all things prove;
For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI

When we met first and loved, I did not build
Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
To last, a love set pendulous between
Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
Distrusting every light that seemed to gild
The onward path, and feared to overlean
A finger even. And, though I have grown serene
And strong since then, I think that God has willed
A still renewable fear . . . O love, O troth . . .
Lest these enclaspèd hands should never hold,
This mutual kiss drop down between us both
As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.
And Love, be false! if *he,* to keep one oath,
Must lose one joy, by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII

Pardon, oh, pardon, that my soul should make,
Of all that strong divineness which I know
For thine and thee, an image only so
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.
It is that distant years which did not take
Thy sovranty, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
Thy purity of likeness and distort
Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit:
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII

First time he kissed me, he but only kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I write;
And ever since, it grew more clean and white,
Slow to world-greetings, quick with its "Oh, list,"

When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst
I could not wear here, plainer to my sight,
Than that first kiss. The second passed in height
The first, and sought the forehead, and half missed,
Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed!
That was the chrism of love, which love's own crown,
With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
The third upon my lips was folded down
In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,
I have been proud and said, "My love, my own."

XXXIX

Because thou hast the power and own'st the grace
To look through and behind this mask of me
(Against which years have beat thus blanchingly
With their rains), and behold my soul's true face,
The dim and weary witness of life's race,—
Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,
The patient angel waiting for a place
In the new Heavens,—because nor sin nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighborhood,
Nor all which others viewing, turn to go,
Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed,—
Nothing repels thee, . . . Dearest, teach me so
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good!

XL

Oh, yes! they love through all this world of ours!
I will not gainsay love, called love forsooth.
I have heard love talked in my early youth,
And since, not so long back but that the flowers
Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans and Giaours
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth
For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth
Slips on the nut if, after frequent showers,
The shell is over-smooth,—and not so much
Will turn the thing called love, aside to hate,
Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such
A lover, my Belovèd! thou canst wait
Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to touch,
And think it soon when others cry "Too late."

XLI

I thank all who have loved me in their hearts,
With thanks and love from mine. Deep thanks to all
Who paused a little near the prison-wall
To hear my music in its louder parts
Ere they went onward, each one to the mart's
Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot
To hearken what I said between my tears, . . .
Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh, to shoot
My soul's full meaning into future years,
That *they* should lend it utterance, and salute
Love that endures, from Life that disappears!

XLII

"My future will not copy fair my past"—
I wrote that once; and thinking at my side
My ministering life-angel justified
The word by his appealing look upcast
To the white throne of God, I turned at last,
And there, instead, saw thee, not unallied
To angels in thy soul! Then I, long tried
By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's staff
Gave out green leaves with morning dews impearled.
I seek no copy now of life's first half:
Leave here the pages with long musing curled,
And write me new my future's epigraph,
New angel mine, unhoped for in the world!

XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

XLIV

Belovèd, thou hast brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer through
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of ours,
Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and bowers
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding; yet here's eglantine,
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not pine.
Instruct thine eyes to keep their colors true,
And tell thy soul their roots are left in mine.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

(1860[1]–1862)

What was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river:
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan
While turbidly flowed the river;
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
(How tall it stood in the river!)
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
In holes, as he sat by the river.

"This is the way," laughed the great god Pan
(Laughed while he sat by the river),
"The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed."
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
He blew in power by the river.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
Piercing sweet by the River!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream on the river.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man:
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore again
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

1 In *The Cornhill Magazine.*

WILLIAM BARNES (1801–1886)

EASTER ZUNDAY

(1844)

Last Easter Jim put on his blue
Frock cwoat, the vu'st time—vier new;
Wi' yollow buttons all o' brass,
That glitter'd in the zun lik' glass;
An' pok'd 'ithin the button-hole
A tutty he'd a-begg'd or stole.
A span-new wes'cot, too, he wore,
Wi' yollow stripes all down avore;
An' tied his breeches' lags below
The knee, wi' ribbon in a bow;
An' drow'd his kitty-boots azide,
An' put his laggèns on, an' tied
His shoes wi' strings two vingers wide,
Because 'twer Easter Zunday.

An' after mornèn church wer out
He come back hwome, an' stroll'd about
All down the vields, an' drough the leäne,
Wi' sister Kit an' cousin Jeäne,
A-turnèn proudly to their view
His yollow breast an' back o' blue.
The lambs did play, the grounds wer green,
The trees did bud, the zun did sheen;
The lark did zing below the sky,
An' roads wer all a-blown so dry,
As if the zummer wer begun;
An' he had sich a bit o' fun!
He meäde the maïdens squeäl an' run,
Because 'twer Easter Zunday.

EASTER MONDAY

(1844)

An' zoo o' Monday we got drough
Our work betimes, an ax'd a vew
Young vo'k vrom Stowe an' Coom, an' zome
Vrom uncle's down at Grange, to come.
An' they so spry, wi' merry smiles,
Did beät the path an' leäp the stiles,
Wi' two or dree young chaps bezide,
To meet an' keep up Easter tide:
Vor we'd a-zaid avore, we'd git
Zome friends to come, an' have a bit
O' fun wi' me, an' Jeäne, an' Kit,
Because 'twer Easter Monday.

An' there we play'd away at quaïts,
An' weigh'd ourzelves wi' sceäles an' waïghts;
An' jump'd to zee who jump'd the spryest,
An' sprung the vurdest an' the highest;
An' rung the bells vor vull an hour,
An' plaÿ'd at vives ageän the tower.
An' then we went an' had a taït,
An' cousin Sammy, wi' his waïght,
Broke off the bar, he wer so fat!
An' toppled off, an' vell down flat
Upon his head, an' squot his hat,
Because 'twer Easter Monday.

THE GIRT WOAK TREE THAT'S IN THE DELL

(1844)

The girt woak tree that's in the dell!
There's noo tree I do love so well;
Vor times an' times when I wer young,
I there've a-climb'd, an' there've a-zwung,
An' pick'd the eäcorns green, a-shed
In wrestlèn storms vrom his broad head.
An' down below's the cloty brook
Where I did vish with line an' hook,
An' beät, in plaÿsome dips and zwims,
The foamy stream, wi' white-skinn'd lim's.
An' there my mother nimbly shot
Her knittèn-needles, as she zot
At evenèn down below the wide
Woak's head, wi' father at her zide.
An' I've a-plaÿed wi' many a bwoy,
That's now a man an' gone awoy;
Zoo I do like noo tree so well
'S the girt woak tree that's in the dell.

An' there, in leäter years, I roved
Wi' thik poor maïd I fondly lov'd,—
The maïd too feäir to die so soon,—
When evenèn twilight, or the moon,
Cast light enough 'ithin the pleäce
To show the smiles upon her feäce,
Wi' eyes so clear's the glassy pool,

An' lips an' cheäks so soft as wool.
There han' in han', wi' bosoms warm,
Wi' love that burn'd but thought noo harm,
Below the wide-bough'd tree we past
The happy hours that went too vast;
An' though she'll never be my wife,
She's still my leäden star o' life.
She's gone: an' she've a-left to me
Her mem'ry in the girt woak tree;
  Zoo I do love noo tree so well
  'S the girt woak tree that's in the dell.

An' oh! mid never ax nor hook
Be brought to spweil his steätely look;
Nor ever roun' his ribby zides
Mid cattle rub ther heäiry hides;
Nor pigs rout up his turf, but keep
His lwonesome sheäde vor harmless sheep;
An' let en grow, an' let en spread,
An' let en live when I be dead.
But oh! if men should come an' vell
The girt woak tree that's in the dell,
An' build his planks 'ithin the zide
O' zome girt ship to plough the tide,
Then, life or death! I'd goo to sea,
A sailèn wi' the girt woak tree:
An' I upon his planks would stand,
An' die a-fightèn vor the land,—
The land so dear,—the land so free,—
The land that bore the girt woak tree;
  Vor I do love noo tree so well
  'S the girt woak tree that's in the dell.

JEANE'S WEDDEN DAY IN MORNEN

(1844)

At last Jeäne come down stairs, a-drest
Wi' weddèn knots upon her breast,
A-blushèn, while a tear did lie
Upon her burnèn cheäk half dry;
An' then her Robert, drawèn nigh
Wi' tothers, took her han' wi' pride,
To meäke her at the church his bride,
  Her weddèn day in mornèn.
Wi' litty voot an' beätèn heart
She stepp'd up in the new light cart,
An' took her bridemaïd up to ride
Along wi' Robert at her zide:
An' uncle's meäre look'd roun' wi' pride
To zee that, if the cart wer vull,
'Twer Jenny that he had to pull,
  Her weddèn day in mornèn.

An' aunt an' uncle stood stock-still,
An' watch'd em trottèn down the hill;
An' when they turn'd off out o' groun'
Down into leäne, two tears run down
Aunt's feäce; an' uncle, turnèn roun',
Sigh'd woonce, an' stump'd off wi' his stick,
Because did touch en to the quick
  To peärt wi' Jeäne thik mornèn.

"Now Jeäne's agone," Tom mutter'd, "we
Shall mwope lik' owls 'ithin a tree;
Vor she did zet us all agog
Vor fun, avore the burnèn log."
An' as he zot an' talk'd, the dog
Put up his nose athirt his thighs,
But coulden meäke en turn his eyes,
  Jeäne's weddèn day in mornèn.

An' then the naïghbours round us, all
By woones an' twos begun to call,
To meet the young vo'k, when the meäre
Mid bring em back a married peäir:
An' all o'm zaid, to Robert's sheäre,
There had a-vell the feärest feäce,
An' kindest heart in all the pleäce,
  Jeäne's weddèn day in mornèn.

ECLOGUE—THE VEAIRIES

(1844)

Simon an' Samel

SIMON

There's what the vo'k do call a veäiry ring
Out there, lo'k zee. Why, 'tis an oddish thing.

SAMEL

Ah! zoo do seem. I wunder how do come!
What is it that do meäke it, I do wonder?

SIMON

Be hang'd if I can tell, I'm sure! But zome
Do zay do come by lightnèn when do thunder;
An' zome do say sich rings as thik ring there is,
Do grow in dancèn-tracks o' little veäries,
That in the nights o' zummer or o' spring
Do come by moonlight, when noo other veet
Do tread the dewy grass, but their's an' meet
An' dance away together in a ring.

SAMEL

An' who d'ye think do work the fiddle-stick?
A little veäiry too, or else wold Nick!

SIMON

Why, they do zay, that at the veäiries' ball,
There's nar a fiddle that's a-heär'd at all;
But they do play upon a little pipe
A-meäde o' kexes or o' straws, dead ripe,
A-stuck in row (zome short an' longer zome)
Wi' slime o' snaïls, or bits o' plum-tree gum,
An' meäke sich music that to hear it sound,
You'd stick so still's a pollard to the ground.

SAMEL

What do em dance? 'Tis plaïn by theäse green wheels,
They don't frisk in an' out in dree-hand reels;
Vor else, instead o' theäse here girt round O,
They'd cut us out a figure aïght (8), d'ye know.

SIMON

Oh! they ha' jigs to fit their little veet.
They woulden dance, you know, at their fine ball,
The dree an' vow'r han' reels that we do sprawl
An' kick about in, when we men do meet.

SAMEL

An' zoo have zome vo'k, in their midnight rambles,
A-catch'd the veäiries, then, in theäsem gambols.

SIMON

Why, yes; but they be off lik' any shot,
So soon's a man's a-comèn near the spot.

SAMEL

But in the day-time where do veäiries hide?
Where be their hwomes, then? where do veäiries bide?

SIMON

Oh! they do get away down under ground,
In hollow pleäzen where they can't be vound.
But still my gramfer, many years agoo,
(He liv'd at Grenley-farm, an milk'd a deäiry),
If what the wolder vo'k do tell is true,
Woone mornèn eärly vound a veäiry.

SAMEL

An' did he stop, then, wi' the good wold bwoy?
Or did he soon contrive to slip awoy?

SIMON

Why, when the vo'k were all asleep, a-bed,
The veäiries us'd to come, as 'tis a-zaid,
Avore the vire wer cwold, an' dance an hour
Or two at dead o' night upon the vloor;
Var they, by only utterèn a word
Or charm, can come down chimney lik' a bird;
Or draw their bodies out so long an' narrow,
That they can vlee drough keyholes lik' an arrow.
An' zoo woone midnight, when the moon did drow
His light drough window, roun' the vloor below,
An' crickets roun' the bricken he'th did zing,
They come an' danced about the hall in ring;
An' tapp'd, drough little holes noo eyes could spy,
A kag o' poor aunt's meäd a-stannèn by.
An' woone o'm drink'd so much, he coulden mind
The word he wer to zay to meäke en small;
He got a-dather'd zoo, that after all
Out tothers went an' left en back behind.
An' after he'd a-beät about his head,
Ageän the keyhole till he wer half dead,
He laid down all along upon the vloor
Till gramfer, comen down, unlocked the door:
An' then he zed en ('twer enough to frighten èn)
Bolt out o' door, an' down the road lik' lightenèn.

THE SETTLE AN' THE GIRT WOOD VIER

(1844)

Ah! naïghbour John, since I an' you
Wer youngsters, ev'ry thing is new.
My father's vires wer all o' logs
O' cleft-wood, down upon the dogs
Below our clavy, high, an' brode
Enough to teäke a cart an' lwoad,
Where big an' little all zot down
At bwoth zides, an' bevore, all roun'.
An' when I zot among em, I
Could zee all up ageän the sky
Drough chimney, where our vo'k did hitch
The zalt-box an' the beäcon-vlitch,
An' watch the smoke on out o' vier,
All up an' out o' tun, an' higher.
An' there wer beäcon up on rack,
An' pleätes an' dishes on the tack;
An' roun' the walls wer heärbs a-stowed
In peäpern bags, an' blathers blowed.
An' just above the clavy-bwoard
Wer father's spurs, an' gun, an' sword;
An' there wer then, our girtest pride,
The settle by the vier zide.
Ah! gi'e me, if I wer a squier,
The settle an' the girt wood vier.

But they've a-wall'd up now wi' bricks
The vier pleäce vor dogs an' sticks,
An' only left a little hole
To teäke a little greäte o' coal,
So small that only twos or drees
Can jist push in an' warm their knees.
An' then the carpets they do use,
Bēn't fit to tread wi' ouer shoes;
An' chairs an' couches be so neat,
You mussen teäke em vor a seat:
They be so fine, that vo'k mus' pleäce
All over em an' outer ceäse,
An' then the cover, when 'tis on,
Is still too fine to loll upon.
Ah! gi'e me, if I wer a squier,
The settle an' the girt wood vier.

Carpets, indeed! You coulden hurt
The stwone-vloor wi' a little dirt;
Vor what wer brought in doors by men,
The women soon mopp'd out ageän.
Zoo we did come vrom muck an' mire,
An' walk in straïght avore the vier;
But now, a man's a-kept at door
At work a pirty while, avore
He's screäp'd an' rubb'd, an' cleän an' fit
To goo in where his wife do zit.
An' then if he should have a whiff
In there, 'twould only breed a miff:
He cänt smoke there, vor smoke woon't goo
'Ithin the footy little flue.
Ah! gi'e me, if I wer a squier,
The settle an' the girt wood vier.

THE BEAM IN GRENLEY CHURCH

(1844)

In church at Grenley woone mid zee
A beam vrom wall to wall; a tree
That's longer than the church is wide,
An' zoo woone end o'n's drough outside,—
Not cut off short, but bound all round
Wi' lead, to keep en seäfe an' sound.

Back when the builders vu'st begun
The church,—as still the teäle do run,—
A man work'd wi' em; no man knew
Who 'twer, nor whither he did goo.
He wer as harmless as a chile,
An' work'd 'ithout a frown or smile,
Till any woaths or strife did rise
To overcast his sparklèn eyes:

An' then he'd call their minds vrom strife,
To think upon another life.
He wer so strong, that all alwone
He lifted beams an' blocks o' stwone,
That others, with the girtest païns,
Could hardly wag wi' bars an' chaïns;
An' yet he never used to stay
O' Zaturdays, to teäke his pay.

Woone day the men wer out o' heart,
To have a beam a-cut too short;
An' in the evenèn, when they shut
Off work, they left en where 'twer put;
An' while dumb night went softly by
Towärds the vi'ry western sky,
A-lullèn birds, an' shuttèn up
The deäisy an' the butter cup,
They went to lay their heavy heads
An' weary bwones upon their beds.

An' when the dewy mornèn broke,
An' show'd the worold, fresh awoke,
Their godly work ageän, they vound
The beam they left upon the ground
A-put in pleäce, where still do bide,
An' long enough to reach outzide.
But he unknown to tother men
Wer never there at work ageän:
Zoo whether he mid be a man
Or angel, wi' a helpèn han',

Or whether all o't wer a dream,
They didden deäre to cut the beam.

CULVER DELL AND THE SQUIRE

(1859)

There's noo pleäce I do like so well,
As Elem Knap in Culver Dell,
Where timber trees, wi' lofty shouds,
Did rise avore the western clouds;
An' stan' ageän, wi' veathery tops,
A-swayën up in North-Hill Copse.
An' on the east the mornèn broke
Above a dewy grove o' woak:
An' noontide shed its burnèn light
On ashes on the southern height;
An' I could vind zome teäles to tell,
O' former days in Culver Dell.

An' all the vo'k did love so well
The good wold squire o' Culver Dell,
That used to ramble drough the sheädes
O' timber, or the burnèn gleädes,
An' come at evenèn up the leäze
Wi' red-eär'd dogs bezide his knees,
An' hold his gun, a-hangèn drough
His eärmpit, out above his tooe.
Wi' kindly words upon his tongue,
Vor vo'k that met en, wold an' young,
Vor he did know the poor so well
'S the richest vo'k in Culver Dell.

An' while the woäk, wi' spreadèn head,
Did sheäde the foxes' verny bed;
An' runnèn heäres, in zunny gleädes,
Did beät the grasses' quiv'rèn' bleädes,
An' speckled pa'tridges took flight
In stubble vields a-feädèn white;
Or he could zee the pheasant strut
In sheädy woods, wi' païnted cwoat;
Or long-tongued dogs did love to run
Among the leaves, bezide his gun;
We didden want vor call to dwell
At hwome in peace in Culver Dell.

But now I hope his kindly feäce
Is gone to vind a better pleäce;
But still, wi' vo'k a-left behind
He'll always be a-kept in mind,
Vor all his springy-vooted hounds
Ha' done o' trottèn round his grounds,
An' we have all a-left the spot,
To teäke, a-scatter'd, each his lot;
An' even Father, li'k the rest,
Ha' left our long vorseäken nest;
An' we should vind it sad to dwell,
Ageän at hwome in Culver Dell.

The aïry mornèns still mid smite
Our windows wi' their rwosy light,
An' high-zunn'd noons mid dry the dew
On growèn groun' below our shoe;
The blushèn evenèn still mid dye,
Wi' viry red, the western sky;
The zunny spring-time's quicknèn power
Mid come to oben leaf an' flower;
An' days an' tides mid bring us on
Woone pleasure when another's gone.
But we must bid a long farewell
To days an' tides in Culver Dell.

A LOT O' MAÏDENS A-RUNNÈN THE VIELDS

(1862)

"Come on. Be sprack, a-laggèn back."
"Oh! be there any cows to hook?"
"Lauk she's afraïd, a silly maïd,"
Cows? No, the cows be down by brook."
"O here then, oh! here is a lot."
"A lot o' what? what is it? what?"
"Why blackberries, as thick
As ever they can stick."
"I've dewberries, oh! twice
As good as they; so nice."
"Look here. Theäse boughs be all but blue
Wi' snags."
"Oh! gi'e me down a vew."
"Come here, oh! do but look."
"What's that? what is it now?"
"Why nuts a-slippèn shell."
"Hee! hee! pull down the bough."
"I wish I had a crook."
"There zome o'm be a-vell."
(*One sings*)
"I wish I was on Bimport Hill
I would zit down and cry my vill."
"Hee! hee! there's Jenny zomewhere nigh,
A-zingèn that she'd like to cry."
(*Jenny sings*)
"I would zit down and cry my vill
Until my tears would dreve a mill."
"Oh! here's an ugly crawlèn thing,
A sneäke." "A slooworm; he wont sting."
"Hee! hee! how she did squal an' hop,
A-spinnèn roun' so quick's a top."
"Look here, oh! quick, be quick."
"What is it? what then? where?"
"A rabbit." "No, a heäre."
"Ooh! ooh! the thorns do prick,"
"How he did scote along the ground
As if he wer avore a hound."
"Now mind the thistles." "Hee, hee, hee,
Why they be knapweeds."

"No." "They be."
"I've zome'hat in my shoe."
"Zit down, an' sheäke it out."
"Oh! emmets, oh! ooh, ooh,
A-crawlèn all about."
"What bird is that, O harken, hush.
How sweetly he do zing."
"A nightingeäle." "La! no, a drush."
"Oh! here's a funny thing."
"Oh! how the bull do hook,
An' bleäre, an' fling the dirt."
"Oh! wont he come athirt?"
"No, he's beyond the brook."
"O lauk! a hornet rose
Up clwose avore my nose."
"Oh! what wer that so white
Rush'd out o' thik tree's top?"
"An owl." "How I did hop,
How I do sheäke wi' fright."
"A musheroom." "O lau!
A twoadstool! Pwoison! Augh."
"What's that, a mouse?"
"O no,
Teäke ceäre, why 'tis a shrow."
"Be sure dont let en come
An' run athirt your shoe
He'll meäke your voot so numb
That you wont veel a tooe." [1]
"Oh! what wer that so loud
A-rumblèn?" "Why a clap
O' thunder. Here's a cloud
O' raïn. I veel a drap."
"A thunderstorm. Do raïn.
Run hwome wi' might an' main."
"Hee! hee! oh! there's a drop
A-trickled down my back. Hee! hee!"
"My head's as wet's a mop."
"Oh! thunder," "there's a crack. Oh! Oh!"
"Oh! I've a-got the stitch, Oh!"
"Oh! I've a-lost my shoe, Oh!"
"There's Fanny into ditch, Oh!"
"I'm wet all drough an' drough, Oh!"

[1] The folklore is that if a shrew-mouse run over a person's foot, it will lame him.

EMILY BRONTË (1818–1848)

A LITTLE WHILE

(*1835?*–1850)

A little while, a little while,
The weary task is put away,
And I can sing and I can smile,
Alike, while I have holiday.

Where wilt thou go, my harassed heart—
What thought, what scene invites thee now?
What spot, or near or far apart,
Has rest for thee, my weary brow?

There is a spot, 'mid barren hills,
Where winter howls, and driving rain;
But, if the dreary tempest chills,
There is a light that warms again.

The house is old, the trees are bare,
Moonless above bends twilight's dome;
But what on earth is half so dear—
So longed for—as the hearth of home?

The mute bird sitting on the stone,
The dank moss dripping from the wall,
The thorn-trees gaunt, the walks o'ergrown,
I love them—how I love them all!

Still, as I mused, the naked room,
The alien firelight died away;
And from the midst of cheerless gloom,
I passed to bright, unclouded day.

A little and a lone green lane
That opened on a common wide;
A distant, dreamy, dim blue chain
Of mountains circling every side.

A heaven so clear, an earth so calm,
So sweet, so soft, so hushed an air;
And, deepening still the dream-like charm,
Wild moor-sheep feeding everywhere.

That was the scene, I knew it well;
I knew the turfy pathway's sweep,
That, winding o'er each billowy swell,
Marked out the tracks of wandering sheep.

Could I have lingered but an hour,
It well had paid a week of toil;
But Truth has banished Fancy's power;
Restraint and heavy task recoil.

Even as I stood with raptured eye,
Absorbed in bliss so deep and dear,
My hour of rest had fleeted by,
And back came labor, bondage, care.

DEATH

(*1843–1846*)

Death! that struck when I was most confiding
In my certain faith of joy to be—
Strike again, Time's withered branch dividing
From the fresh root of Eternity!

Leaves, upon Time's branch, were growing brightly,
Full of sap, and full of silver dew;
Birds beneath its shelter gathered nightly;
Daily round its flowers the wild bees flew.

Sorrow passed, and plucked the golden blossom;
Guilt stripped off the foliage in its pride;
But, within its parent's kindly bosom,
Flowed for ever Life's restoring tide.

Little mourned I for the parted gladness,
For the vacant nest and silent song—
Hope was there, and laughed me out of sadness;
Whispering, "Winter will not linger long!"

And, behold! with tenfold increase blessing,
Spring adorned the beauty-burdened spray;
Wind and rain and fervent heat, caressing,
Lavished glory on that second May!

High it rose—no wingèd grief could sweep it;
Sin was scared to distance with its shine;
Love, and its own life, had power to keep it
From all wrong—from every blight but thine!

Cruel Death! The young leaves droop and languish;
Evening's gentle air may still restore—
No! the morning sunshine mocks my anguish—
Time, for me, must never blossom more!

Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish
Where that perished sapling used to be;
Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will nourish
That from which it sprung—Eternity.

REMEMBRANCE

(*1845–1846*)

Cold in the earth—and the deep snow piled above thee,
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
Have I forgot, my only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains, on that northern shore,
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?

Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild Decembers,
From those brown hills, have melted into spring:
Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive, if I forget thee,
While the world's tide is bearing me along;
Other desires and other hopes beset me,
Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong!

No later light has lightened up my heaven,
No second morn has ever shone for me;
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

But, when the days of golden dreams had perished,
And even Despair was powerless to destroy;
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened, and fed without the aid of joy.

Then did I check the tears of useless passion—
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;

Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine.

And, even yet, I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain;
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?

SONG

(1846)

The linnet in the rocky dells,
The moor-lark in the air,
The bee among the heather bells
That hide my lady fair:

The wild deer browse above her breast;
The wild birds raise their brood;
And they, her smiles of love caressed,
Have left her solitude!

I ween, that when the grave's dark wall
Did first her form retain,
They thought their hearts could ne'er recall
The light of joy again.

They thought the tide of grief would flow
Unchecked through future years;
But where is all their anguish now,
And where are all their tears?

Well, let them fight for honor's breath,
Or pleasure's shade pursue—
The dweller in the land of death
Is changed and careless too.

And, if their eyes should watch and weep
Till sorrow's source were dry,
She would not, in her tranquil sleep,
Return a single sigh!

Blow, west-wind, by the lonely mound,
And murmur, summer-streams—
There is no need of other sound
To soothe my lady's dreams.

THE PRISONER

A FRAGMENT

(1846)

In the dungeon-crypts idly did I stray,
Reckless of the lives wasting there away;
"Draw the ponderous bars! open, Warder stern!"
He dared not say me nay—the hinges harshly turn.

"Our guests are darkly lodged," I whisper'd, gazing through
The vault, whose grated eye showed heaven more grey than blue;
(This was when glad Spring laughed in awaking pride);
"Aye, darkly lodged enough!" returned my sullen guide.

Then, God forgive my youth; forgive my careless tongue;
I scoffed, as the chill chains on the damp flagstones rung:
"Confined in triple walls, art thou so much to fear,
That we must bind thee down and clench thy fetters here?"

The captive raised her face; it was as soft and mild
As sculptured marble saint, or slumbering unwean'd child;
It was so soft and mild, it was so sweet and fair,
Pain could not trace a line, nor grief a shadow there!

The captive raised her hand and pressed it to her brow;
"I have been struck," she said, "and I am suffering now;
Yet these are little worth, your bolts and irons strong;
And, were they forged in steel, they could not hold me long."

Hoarse laughed the jailor grim: "Shall I be won to hear;
Dost think, fond, dreaming wretch, that *I* shall grant thy prayer?
Or, better still, wilt melt my master's heart with groans?
Ah! sooner might the sun thaw down these granite stones.

"My master's voice is low, his aspect bland and kind,

But hard as hardest flint the soul that lurks behind;
And I am rough and rude, yet not more rough to see
Than is the hidden ghost that has its home in me."

About her lips there played a smile of almost scorn.
"My friend," she gently said, "you have not heard me mourn;
When you my kindred's lives, *my* lost life, can restore,
Then may I weep and sue,—but never, friend, before!

"Still, let my tyrants know, I am not doomed to wear
Year after year in gloom, and desolate despair;
A messenger of Hope comes every night to me,
And offers for short life, eternal liberty.

"He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars.
Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire,
And visions rise, and change, that kill me with desire.

"Desire for nothing known in my maturer years,
When Joy grew mad with awe, at counting future tears.
When, if my spirit's sky was full of flashes warm,
I knew not whence they came, from sun or thunder-storm.

"But, first, a hush of peace—a soundless calm descends;
The struggle of distress, and fierce impatience ends;
Mute music soothes my breast—unuttered harmony,
That I could never dream, till Earth was lost to me.

"Then dawns the Invisible; the Unseen its truth reveals;
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels:
Its wings are almost free—its home, its harbor found,
Measuring the gulf, it stoops and dares the final bound.

"Oh! dreadful is the check—intense the agony—
When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see;
When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again;
The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.

"Yet I would lose no sting, would wish no torture less;
The more that anguish racks, the earlier it will bless;
And robed in fires of hell, or bright with heavenly shine,
If it but herald death, the vision is divine!"

She ceased to speak, and we, unanswering, turned to go—
We had no further power to work the captive woe;
Her cheek, her gleaming eye, declared that man had given
A sentence, unapproved, and overruled by Heaven.

TO IMAGINATION

(1846)

When weary with the long day's care,
And earthly change from pain to pain,
And lost, and ready to despair,
Thy kind voice calls me back again,
Oh, my true friend! I am not lone,
While thou canst speak with such a tone!

So hopeless is the world without;
The world within I doubly prize;
Thy world, where guile, and hate, and doubt,
And cold suspicion never rise;
Where thou, and I, and Liberty,
Have undisputed sovereignty.

What matters it, that all around
Danger, and guilt, and darkness lie,
If but within our bosom's bound
We hold a bright, untroubled sky,

Warm with ten thousand mingled rays
Of suns that know no winter days?

Reason, indeed, may oft complain
  For Nature's sad reality,
And tell the suffering heart how vain
  Its cherished dreams must always be;
And Truth may rudely trample down
The flowers of Fancy, newly-blown:

But thou art ever there, to bring
  The hovering vision back, and breathe
New glories o'er the blighted spring,
  And call a lovelier Life from Death,
And whisper, with a voice divine,
Of real worlds, as bright as thine.

I trust not to thy phantom bliss,
  Yet, still, in evening's quiet hour,
With never-failing thankfulness,
  I welcome thee, Benignant Power,
Sure solacer of human cares,
And sweeter hope, when hope despairs!

THE OLD STOIC

(1846)

Riches I hold in light esteem,
  And Love I laugh to scorn;
And lust of fame was but a dream,
  That vanished with the morn:

And if I pray, the only prayer
  That moves my lips for me
Is, "Leave the heart that now I bear,
  And give me liberty!"

Yes, as my swift days near their goal,
  'Tis all that I implore;
In life and death a chainless soul,
  With courage to endure.

AYE—THERE IT IS

(1850)

In these stanzas a louder gale has roused the sleeper on her pillow: the wakened soul struggles to blend with the storm by which it is stayed.

"Aye—there it is! it wakes to-night
  Deep feelings I thought dead;
Strong in the blast—quick gathering light—
  The heart's flame kindles red.

"Now I can tell by thine altered cheek,
  And by thine eyes' full gaze,
And by the words thou scarce dost speak,
  How wildly fancy plays.

"Yes—I could swear that glorious wind
  Has swept the world aside,
Has dashed its memory from thy mind
  Like foam-bells from the tide:

"And thou art now a spirit pouring
  Thy presence into all:
The thunder of the tempest's roaring,
  The whisper of its fall:

"An universal influence,
  From thine own influence free;
A principle of life—intense—
  Lost to mortality.

"Thus truly, when that breast is cold,
  Thy prisoned soul shall rise;
The dungeon mingle with the mould—
  The captive with the skies.
Nature's deep being, thine shall hold,
Her spirit all thy spirit fold,
  Her breath absorb thy sighs.
Mortal! though soon life's tale is told;
  Who once lives, never dies!"

THE VISIONARY

(1850)

Silent is the house: all are laid asleep:
One alone looks out o'er the snow-wreaths deep,
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze
That whirls the wildering drift, and bends the groaning trees.

Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor;
Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or door;
The little lamp burns straight, its rays shoot strong and far:
I trim it well, to be the wanderer's guiding-star.

Frown, my haughty sire! chide, my angry dame;
Set your slaves to spy; threaten me with shame:
But neither sire nor dame, nor prying serf shall know,

What angel nightly tracks that waste of
frozen snow.

What I love shall come like visitant of air,
Safe in secret power from lurking human
snare;
What loves me, no word of mine shall e'er
betray,
Though for faith unstained my life must
forfeit pay.

Burn, then, little lamp; glimmer straight
and clear—
Hush! a rustling wing stirs, methinks, the
air:
He for whom I wait, thus ever comes to
me;
Strange Power! I trust thy might; trust
thou my constancy.

STANZAS

(1850)

Often rebuked, yet always back returning
To those first feelings that were born
with me,
And leaving busy chase of wealth and
learning
For idle dreams of things which cannot
be:

To-day, I will seek not the shadowy
region;
Its unsustaining vastness waxes drear;
And visions rising, legion after legion,
Bring the unreal world too strangely
near.

I'll walk, but not in old heroic traces,
And not in paths of high morality,
And not among the half-distinguished
faces,
The clouded forms of long-past history.

I'll walk where my own nature would be
leading:
It vexes me to choose another guide:
Where the grey flocks in ferny glens are
feeding;
Where the wild wind blows on the moun-
tain-side.

What have those lonely mountains worth
revealing?
More glory and more grief than I can
tell:
The earth that wakes *one* human heart to
feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven
and Hell.

LAST LINES

(*1848*–1850)

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled
sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from
fear.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life—that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in Thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unutterably
vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idle froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by Thine infinity;
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and
rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render
void:
Thou—Thou art Being and Breath
And what Thou art may never be de-
stroyed.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH (1819–1861)

IN A LECTURE ROOM

(*1840*–1849)

Away, haunt thou not me,
Thou vain Philosophy!
Little hast thou bestead,
Save to perplex the head,
And leave the spirit dead.
Unto thy broken cisterns wherefore go,
While from the secret treasure-depths below,
Fed by the skiey shower,
And clouds that sink and rest on hill-tops high,
Wisdom at once, and Power,
Are welling, bubbling forth, unseen, incessantly?
Why labor at the dull mechanic oar,
When the fresh breeze is blowing,
And the strong current flowing,
Right onward to the Eternal Shore?

From "BLANK MISGIVINGS OF A CREATURE MOVING ABOUT IN WORLDS NOT REALIZED"

(*1841*–1849)

How often sit I, poring o'er
  My strange distorted youth,
Seeking in vain, in all my store,
  One feeling based on truth;
Amid the maze of petty life,
  A clue whereby to move,
A spot whereon in toil and strife
  To dare to rest and love.
So constant as my heart would be,
  So fickle as it must,
'T were well for others as for me
  'T were dry as summer dust.
Excitements come, and act and speech
  Flow freely forth;—but no,
Nor they, nor aught beside can reach
  The buried world below.

τὸ καλόν

(*1841*–1849)

I have seen higher, holier things than these,
  And therefore must to these refuse my heart,
Yet am I panting for a little ease;
  I'll take, and so depart.

Ah, hold! the heart is prone to fall away,
  Her high and cherished visions to forget,
And if thou takest, how wilt thou repay
  So vast, so dread a debt?

How will the heart, which now thou trustest, then
  Corrupt, yet in corruption mindful yet,
Turn with sharp stings upon itself! Again,
  Bethink thee of the debt!

—Hast thou seen higher, holier things than these,
  And therefore must to these thy heart refuse?
With the true best, alack, how ill agrees
  That best that thou would'st choose!

The Summum Pulchrum rests in heaven above;
  Do thou, as best thou may'st, thy duty do:
Amid the things allowed thee live and love;
  Some day thou shalt it view.

Qua Cursum Ventus

(1849)

As ships, becalmed at eve, that lay
  With canvas drooping, side by side,
Two towers of sail at dawn of day
  Are scarce long leagues apart descried;

When fell the night, upsprung the breeze,
  And all the darkling hours they plied,
Nor dreamt but each the self-same seas
  By each was cleaving, side by side:

E'en so, but why the tale reveal
Of those, whom year by year unchanged,
Brief absence joined anew to feel,
Astounded, soul from soul estranged?

At dead of night their sails were filled,
And onward each rejoicing steered—
Ah, neither blame, for neither willed,
Or wist, what first with dawn appeared!

To veer, how vain! On, onward strain,
Brave barks! In light, in darkness too,
Through winds and tides one compass guides—
To that, and your own selves, be true.

But O blithe breeze; and O great seas,
Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,
On your wide plain they join again,
Together lead them home at last.

One port, methought, alike they sought,
One purpose hold where'er they fare,—
O bounding breeze, O rushing seas!
At last, at last, unite them there!

THE NEW SINAI

(*1845–1869*)

Lo, here is God, and there is God!
Believe it not, O Man;
In such vain sort to this and that
The ancient heathen ran:
Though old Religion shake her head,
And say in bitter grief,
The day behold, at first foretold,
Of atheist unbelief:
Take better part, with manly heart,
Thine adult spirit can;
Receive it not, believe it not,
Believe it not, O Man!

As men at dead of night awaked
With cries, "The king is here,"
Rush forth and greet whome'er they meet,
Whoe'er shall first appear;
And still repeat, to all the street,
"'Tis he,—the king is here";
The long procession moveth on,
Each nobler form they see,
With changeful suit they still salute
And cry, "'Tis he, 'tis he!"

So, even so, when men were young,
And earth and heaven were new,
And His immediate presence He
From human hearts withdrew,
The soul perplexed and daily vexed
With sensuous False and True,
Amazed, bereaved, no less believed,
And fain would see Him too:
"He is!" the prophet-tongues proclaimed;
In joy and hasty fear,
"He is!" aloud replied the crowd,
"Is here, and here, and here."

"He is! They are!" in distance seen
On yon Olympus high,
In those Avernian woods abide
And walk this azure sky:
"They are! They are!"—to every show
Its eyes the baby turned,
And blazes sacrificial, tall,
On thousand altars burned:
"They are! They are!"—On Sinai's top
Far seen the lightnings shone,
The thunder broke, a trumpet spoke,
And God said, "I am One."

God spake it out, "I, God, am One";
The unheeding ages ran.
And baby-thoughts again, again,
Have dogged the growing man:
And as of old from Sinai's top
God said that God is One,
By Science strict so speaks He now
To tell us, There is None!
Earth goes by chemic forces; Heaven's
A Mécanique Céleste!
And heart and mind of human kind
A watch-work as the rest!

Is this a Voice, as was the Voice,
Whose speaking told abroad,
When thunder pealed, and mountain reeled,
The ancient truth of God?
Ah, not the Voice; 'tis but the cloud,
The outer-darkness dense,
Where image none, nor e'er was seen
Similitude of sense.
'Tis but the cloudy darkness dense
That wrapt the Mount around;
While in amaze the people stays,
To hear the Coming Sound.

Is there no prophet-soul the while
To dare, sublimely meek,
Within the shroud of blackest cloud
The Deity to seek?
'Midst atheistic systems dark,
And darker hearts' despair,
That soul has heard perchance His word,
And on the dusky air

His skirts, as passed He by, to see
Hath strained on their behalf,
Who on the plain, with dance amain,
Adore the Golden Calf.

'Tis but the cloudy darkness dense;
Though blank the tale it tells
No God, no Truth! yet He, in sooth,
Is there—within it dwells;
Within the sceptic darkness deep
He dwells that none may see,
Till idol forms and idle thoughts
Have passed and ceased to be:
No God, no Truth! ah though, in sooth
So stand the doctrine's half:
On Egypt's track return not back,
Nor own the Golden Calf.

Take better part, with manlier heart,
Thine adult spirit can;
No God, no Truth, receive it ne'er—
Believe it ne'er—O Man!
But turn not then to seek again
What first the ill began;
No God, it saith; ah, wait in faith
God's self-completing plan;
Receive it not, but leave it not,
And wait it out, O man!

"The Man that went the cloud within
Is gone and vanished quite;
He cometh not," the people cries,
"Nor bringeth God to sight:
Lo these thy gods, that safety give,
Adore and keep the feast!"
Deluding and deluded cries
The Prophet's brother-Priest:
And Israel all bows down to fall
Before the gilded beast.

Devout, indeed! that priestly creed,
O Man, reject as sin;
The clouded hill attend thou still,
And him that went within.
He yet shall bring some worthy thing
For waiting souls to see:
Some sacred word that he hath heard
Their light and life shall be;
Some lofty part, than which the heart
Adopt no nobler can,
Thou shalt receive, thou shalt believe
And thou shalt do, O Man!

THE QUESTIONING SPIRIT

(*1847–1862*)

The human spirits saw I on a day,
Sitting and looking each a different way:
And hardly tasking, subtly questioning,
Another spirit went around the ring
To each and each: and as he ceased his say,
Each after each, I heard them singly sing,
Some querulously high, some softly, sadly low,
We know not—what avails to know?
We know not—wherefore need we know?
This answer gave they still unto his suing,
We know not, let us do as we are doing.
Dost thou not know that these things only seem?—
I know not, let me dream my dream.
Are dust and ashes fit to make a treasure?—
I know not, let me take my pleasure.
What shall avail the knowledge thou hast sought?—
I know not, let me think my thought.
What is the end of strife?—
I know not, let me live my life.
How many days or e'er thou mean'st to move?—
I know not, let me love my love.
Were not things old once new?—
I know not, let me do as others do.
And when the rest were over past,
I know not, I will do my duty, said the last.

Thy duty do? rejoined the voice,
Ah, do it, do it, and rejoice;
But shalt thou then, when all is done,
Enjoy a love, embrace a beauty
Like these, that may be seen and won
In life, whose course will then be run;
Or wilt thou be where there is none?
I know not, I will do my duty.

And taking up the word around, above, below,
Some querulously high, some softly, sadly low,
We know not, sang they all, nor ever need we know.
We know not, sang they, what avails to know?
Whereat the questioning spirit, some short space,
Though unabashed, stood quiet in his place.
But as the echoing chorus died away
And to their dreams the rest returned apace,
By the one spirit I saw him kneeling low,
And in a silvery whisper heard him say:

Truly thou know'st not, and thou need'st not know;
Hope only, hope thou, and believe alway;
I also know not, and I need not know,
Only with questionings pass I to and fro,
Perplexing these that sleep, and in their folly
Imbreeding doubt and sceptic melancholy;
Till that, their dreams deserting, they with me
Come all to this true ignorance and thee.

BETHESDA

A SEQUEL

(*1849–1862*)

I saw again the spirits on a day,
Where on the earth in mournful case they lay;
Five porches were there, and a pool, and round,
Huddling in blankets, strewn upon the ground,
Tied-up and bandaged, weary, sore and spent,
The maimed and halt, diseased and impotent.

For a great angel came, 't was said, and stirred
The pool at certain seasons, and the word
Was, with this people of the sick, that they
Who in the waters here their limbs should lay
Before the motion on the surface ceased
Should of their torment straightway be released.
So with shrunk bodies and with heads down-dropped,
Stretched on the steps, and at the pillars propped,
Watching by day and listening through the night,
They filled the place, a miserable sight.

And I beheld that on the stony floor
He too, that spoke of duty once before,
No otherwise than others here to-day,
Foredone and sick and sadly muttering lay.
"I know not, I will do—what is it I would say:
What was that word which once sufficed alone for all,
Which now I seek in vain, and never can recall?"
And then, as weary of in vain renewing
His question, thus his mournful thought pursuing,
"I know not, I must do as other men are doing."

But what the waters of that pool might be,
Of Lethe were they, or Philosophy;
And whether he, long waiting, did attain
Deliverance from the burden of his pain
There with the rest; or whether, yet before,
Some more diviner stranger passed the door
With his small company into that sad place,
And breathing hope into the sick man's face,
Bade him take up his bed, and rise and go,
What the end were, and whether it were so,
Further than this I saw not, neither know.

From "THE BOTHIE OF TOBER-NA-VUOLICH"

(1848)

V

——*Putavi*
Stultus ego huic nostræ similem

So in the cottage with Adam the pupils five together
Duly remained, and read, and looked no more for Philip,
Philip at Balloch shooting and dancing with Lady Maria.
Breakfast at eight, and now, for brief September daylight,
Luncheon at two, and dinner at seven, or even later,
Five full hours between for the loch and the glen and the mountain,—
So in the joy of their life and glory of shooting-jackets,
So they read and roamed, the pupils five with Adam.
What if autumnal shower came frequent and chill from the westward,
What if on browner sward with yellow leaves besprinkled
Gemming the crispy blade, the delicate gossamer gemming,
Frequent and thick lay at morning the chilly beads of hoar-frost,

Duly in *matutine* still, and daily, whatever the weather,
Bathed in the rain and the frost and the mist with the Glory of headers
Hope. Thither also at times, of cold and of possible gutters
Careless, unmindful, unconscious, would Hobbes, or e'er they departed,
Come, in heavy pea-coat his trouserless trunk enfolding,
Come, under coat over-brief those lusty legs displaying,
All from the shirt to the slipper the natural man revealing.
Duly there they bathed and daily, the twain or the trio,
Where in the morning was custom, where over a ledge of granite
Into a granite basin the amber torrent descended;
Beautiful, very, to gaze-in ere plunging; beautiful also,
Perfect as picture, as vision entrancing that comes to the sightless,
Through the great granite jambs the stream, the glen, and the mountain,
Beautiful, seen by snatches in intervals of dressing,
Morn after morn, unsought for, recurring; themselves too seeming
Not as spectators, accepted into it, immingled, as truly
Part of it as are the kine in the field lying there by the birches.
So they bathed, they read, they roamed in glen and forest;
Far amid blackest pines to the waterfall they shadow,
Far up the long, long glen to the loch, and the loch beyond it,
Deep under huge red cliffs, a secret; and oft by the starlight,
Or the aurora perchance, racing home for the eight o'clock mutton.
So they bathed, and read, and roamed in heathery Highland;
There in the joy of their life and glory of shooting-jackets
Bathed and read and roamed, and looked no more for Philip.

VI

Ducite ab urbe domum, mea carmina, ducite Daphnin

Bright October was come, the misty-bright October,
Bright October was come to burn and glen and cottage;
But the cottage was empty, the *matutine* deserted.
Who are these that walk by the shore of the salt sea water?
Here in the dusky eve, on the road by the salt sea water?
Who are these? and where? it is no sweet seclusion;
Blank hill-sides slope down to a salt sea loch at their bases,
Scored by runnels, that fringe ere they end with rowan and alder;
Cottages here and there outstanding bare on the mountain,
Peat-roofed, windowless, white; the road underneath by the water.
There on the blank hill-side, looking down through the loch to the ocean,
There with a runnel beside, and pine-trees twain before it,
There with the road underneath, and in sight of coaches and steamers,
Dwelling of David Mackaye, and his daughters Elspie and Bella,
Sends up a column of smoke the Bothie of Tober-na-vuolich.
And of the older twain, the elder was telling the younger,
How on his pittance of soil he lived, and raised potatoes,
Barley, and oats, in the bothie where lived his father before him;
Yet was smith by trade, and had travelled making horse-shoes
Far; in the army had seen some service with brave Sir Hector,
Wounded soon, and discharged, disabled as smith and soldier;
He had been many things since that,—drover, schoolmaster,
Whitesmith,—but when his brother died childless came up hither;
And although he could get fine work that would pay, in the city,
Still was fain to abide where his father abode before him.
And the lassies are bonnie,—I'm father and mother to them,—
Bonnie and young; they're healthier here, I judge, and safer:
I myself find time for their reading, writing, and learning.
So on the road they walk by the shore of the salt sea water,
Silent a youth and maid, and elders twain conversing.

This was the letter that came when Adam was leaving the cottage.
If you can manage to see me before going off to Dartmoor,
Come by Tuesday's coach through Glencoe (you have not seen it),
Stop at the ferry below, and ask your way (you will wonder,
There however I am) to the Bothie of Tober-na-vuolich.
And on another scrap, of next day's date, was written:
It was by accident purely I lit on the place; I was returning,
Quietly, travelling homeward by one of these wretched coaches;
One of the horses cast a shoe; and a farmer passing
Said, Old David's your man; a clever fellow at shoeing
Once; just here by the firs; they call it Tober-na-vuolich.
So I saw and spoke with David Mackaye, our acquaintance.
When we came to the journey's end, some five miles farther,
In my unoccupied evening I walked back again to the bothie.
But on a final crossing, still later in date, was added:
Come as soon as you can; be sure and do not refuse me.
Who would have guessed I should find my haven and end of my travel,
Here, by accident too, in the bothie we laughed about so?
Who would have guessed that here would be she whose glance at Rannoch
Turned me in that mysterious way; yes, angels conspiring,
Slowly drew me, conducted me, home, to herself; the needle
Which in the shaken compass flew hither and thither, at last, long
Quivering, poises to north. I think so. But I am cautious;
More, at least, than I was in the old silly days when I left you.
Not at the bothie now; at the change-house in the clachan;[1]
Why I delay my letter is more than I can tell you.

There was another scrap, without or date or comment,
Dotted over with various observations, as follows:

1 Public-house in the hamlet.

Only think, I had danced with her twice, and did not remember.
I was as one that sleeps on the railway; one, who dreaming
Hears thro' his dream the name of his home shouted out; hears and hears not,—
Faint, and louder again, and less loud, dying in distance;
Dimly conscious, with something of inward debate and choice,—and
Sense of claim and reality present, anon relapses
Nevertheless, and continues the dream and fancy, while forward
Swiftly, remorseless, the car presses on, he knows not whither.
Handsome who handsome is, who handsome does is more so;
Pretty is all very pretty, it's prettier far to be useful.
No, fair Lady Maria, I say not that; but I *will* say,
Stately is service accepted, but lovelier service rendered,
Interchange of service the law and condition of Beauty:
Any way beautiful only to be the thing one is meant for.
I, I am sure, for the sphere of mere ornament am not intended:
No, nor she, I think, thy sister at Tober-na-vuolich.
This was the letter of Philip, and this had brought the Tutor:
This is why Tutor and pupil are walking with David and Elspie.—

When for the night they part, and these, once more together,
Went by the lochside along to the change-house near in the clachan,
Thus to his pupil anon commenced the grave man Adam.
Yes, she is beautiful, Philip, beautiful even as morning:
Yes, it is that which I said, the Good and not the Attractive!
Happy is he that finds, and finding does not leave it!
Ten more days did Adam with Philip abide at the changehouse,
Ten more nights they met, they walked with father and daughter.
Ten more nights, and night by night more distant away were
Philip and she; every night less heedful, by habit, the father.

Happy ten days, most happy: and, otherwise than intended,
Fortunate visit of Adam, companion and friend to David.
Happy ten days, be ye fruitful of happiness! Pass o'er them slowly,
Slowly; like cruise of the prophet be multiplied, even to ages!
Pass slowly o'er them ye days of October; ye soft misty mornings,
Long dusky eves; pass slowly; and thou, great Term-Time of Oxford,
Awful with lectures and books, and Little-goes, and Great-goes,
Till but the sweet bud be perfect, recede and retire for the lovers,
Yea, for the sweet love of lovers, postpone thyself even to doomsday!
Pass o'er them slowly, ye hours! Be with them, ye Loves and Graces!

PESCHIERA

(*1849*–1862)

What voice did on my spirit fall,
Peschiera, when thy bridge I crost?
"'Tis better to have fought and lost,
Than never to have fought at all."

The tricolor—a trampled rag—
Lies, dirt and dust; the lines I track
By sentry boxes yellow-black,
Lead up to no Italian flag.

I see the Croat soldier stand
Upon the grass of your redoubts;
The eagle with his black wings flouts
The breadth and beauty of your land.

Yet not in vain, although in vain,
O men of Brescia, on the day
Of loss past hope, I heard you say
Your welcome to the noble pain.

You say, "Since so it is,—good-bye
Sweet life, high hope; but whatsoe'er
May be, or must, no tongue shall dare
To tell, 'The Lombard feared to die!'"

You said (there shall be answer fit),
"And if our children must obey,
They must; but thinking on this day
'Twill less debase them to submit."

You said (Oh not in vain you said),
"Haste, brothers, haste, while yet we may;
The hours ebb fast of this one day
When blood may yet be nobly shed."

Ah! not for idle hatred, not
For honor, fame, nor self-applause,
But for the glory of the cause,
You did, what will not be forgot.

And though the stranger stand, 'tis true,
By force and fortune's right he stands;
By fortune, which is in God's hands,
And strength, which yet shall spring in you.

This voice did on my spirit fall,
Peschiera, when thy bridge I crost,
"'Tis better to have fought and lost,
Than never to have fought at all."

ALTERAM PARTEM

(*1849*–1862)

Or shall I say, Vain word, false thought,
Since Prudence hath her martyrs too,
And Wisdom dictates not to do,
Till doing shall be not for nought?

Not ours to give or lose is life;
Will Nature, when her brave ones fall,
Remake her work? or songs recall
Death's victim slain in useless strife?

That rivers flow into the sea
Is loss and waste, the foolish say,
Nor know that back they find their way,
Unseen, to where they wont to be.

Showers fall upon the hills, springs flow,
The river runneth still at hand.
Brave men are born into the land,
And whence the foolish do not know.

No! no vain voice did on me fall,
Peschiera, when thy bridge I crost,
"*'T is* better to have fought and lost,
Than never to have fought at all."

From "DIPSYCHUS"

(*1849*–1862)

"There is no God," the wicked saith,
"And truly it 's a blessing,
For what He might have done with us
It's better only guessing."

"There is no God," a youngster thinks,
"Or really, if there may be,
He surely did not mean a man
Always to be a baby."

"There is no God, or if there is,"
The tradesman thinks, "'twere funny
If He should take it ill in me
To make a little money."

"Whether there be," the rich man says,
"It matters very little,
For I and mine, thank somebody,
Are not in want of victual."

Some others, also, to themselves,
Who scarce so much as doubt it,
Think there is none, when they are well
And do not think about it.

But country folks who live beneath
The shadow of the steeple;
The parson and the parson's wife,
And mostly married people;

Youths green and happy in first love,
So thankful for illusion;
And men caught out in what the world
Calls guilt, in first confusion;

And almost every one when age,
Disease, or sorrows strike him,
Inclines to think there is a God,
Or something very like Him.

This world is very odd we see,
We do not comprehend it;
But in one fact we all agree,
God won't, and we can't mend it.

Being common sense, it can't be sin
To take it as I find it;
The pleasure to take pleasure in;
The pain, try not to mind it.

These juicy meats, this flashing wine,
May be an unreal mere appearance;
Only—for my inside, in fine,
They have a singular coherence.

Oh yes, my pensive youth, abstain;
And any empty sick sensation,
Remember, anything like pain
Is only your imagination.

Trust me, I've read your German sage
To far more purpose e'er than you did;
You find it in his wisest page,
Whom God deludes is well deluded.

SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NOUGHT AVAILETH

(*1849*–1862)

Say not the struggle nought availeth,
The labor and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

EASTER DAY

NAPLES, 1849

Through the great sinful streets of Naples as I passed,
With fiercer heat than flamed above my head
My heart was hot within me; till at last
My brain was lightened when my tongue had said—
Christ is not risen!
Christ is not risen, no—
He lies and moulders low;
Christ is not risen!

What though the stone were rolled away, and though
The grave found empty there?—
If not there, then elsewhere;
If not where Joseph laid Him first, why then
Where other men
Translaid Him after, in some humbler clay.

Long ere to-day
Corruption that sad perfect work hath done,
Which here she scarcely, lightly had begun:
The foul engendered worm
Feeds on the flesh of the life-giving form
Of our most Holy and Anointed One.
He is not risen, no—
He lies and moulders low;
Christ is not risen!

What if the women, ere the dawn was gray,
Saw one or more great angels, as they say
(Angels, or Him himself)? Yet neither there, nor then,
Nor afterwards, nor elsewhere, nor at all,
Hath He appeared to Peter or the Ten;
Nor save in thunderous terror, to blind Saul;
Save in an after Gospel and late Creed,
He is not risen, indeed,—
Christ is not risen!

Or, what if e'en, as runs a tale, the Ten
Saw, heard, and touched, again and yet again?
What if at Emmaüs' inn, and by Capernaum's Lake,
Came One, the bread that brake—
Came One that spake as never mortal spake,
And with them ate, and drank, and stood, and walked about?
Ah? "some" did well to "doubt!"
Ah! the true Christ, while these things came to pass,
Nor heard, nor spake, nor walked, nor lived, alas!
He was not risen, no—
He lay and mouldered low,
Christ is not risen!

As circulates in some great city crowd
A rumor changeful, vague, importunate, and loud,
From no determined centre or of fact
Or authorship exact,
Which no man can deny
Nor verify;
So spread the wondrous fame;
He all the same
Lay senseless, mouldering, low:
He was not risen, no—
Christ was not risen!

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
As of the unjust, also of the just—
Yea, of that Just One, too!
This is the one sad Gospel that is true—
Christ is not risen!

Is He not risen, and shall we not rise?
Oh, we unwise!
What did we dream, what wake we to discover?
Ye hills, fall on us, and ye mountains, cover!
In darkness and great gloom
Come ere we thought it is *our* day of doom;
From the cursed world, which is one tomb,
Christ is not risen!

Eat, drink, and play, and think that this is bliss:
There is no heaven but this;
There is no hell,
Save earth, which serves the purpose doubly well,
Seeing it visits still
With equalest apportionment of ill
Both good and bad alike, and brings to one same dust
The unjust and the just
With Christ, who is not risen.

Eat, drink, and die, for we are souls bereaved:
Of all the creatures under heaven's wide cope
We are most hopeless, who had once most hope,
And most beliefless, that had most believed.
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
As of the unjust, also of the just—
Yea, of that Just One too!
It is the one sad Gospel that is true—
Christ is not risen!

Weep not beside the tomb,
Ye women, unto whom
He was great solace while ye tended Him;
Ye who with napkin o'er the head
And folds of linen round each wounded limb
Laid out the Sacred Dead;
And thou that bar'st Him in thy wondering womb;
Yea, Daughters of Jerusalem, depart,
Bind up as best ye may your own sad bleeding heart:

Go to your homes, your living children tend,
Your earthly spouses love;
Set your affections *not* on things above,
Which moth and rust corrupt, which quickliest come to end:
Or pray, if pray ye must, and pray, if pray ye can,
For death; since dead is He whom ye deemed more than man,
Who is not risen: no—
But lies and moulders low—
Who is not risen!

Ye men of Galilee!
Why stand ye looking up to heaven,
where Him ye ne'er may see,
Neither ascending hence, nor returning hither again?
Ye ignorant and idle fishermen!
Hence to your huts, and boats, and inland native shore,
And catch not men, but fish;
Whate'er things ye might wish,
Him neither here nor there ye e'er shall meet with more.
Ye poor deluded youths, go home,
Mend the old nets ye left to roam,
Tie the split oar, patch the torn sail:
It was indeed an "idle tale"—
He was not risen!
And, oh, good men of ages yet to be,
Who shall believe *because* ye did not see—
Oh, be ye warned, be wise!
Nor more with pleading eyes,
And sobs of strong desire,
Unto the empty vacant void aspire,
Seeking another and impossible birth
That is not of your own, and only mother earth.
But if there is no other life for you,
Sit down and be content, since this must even do;
He is not risen!
One look, and then depart,
Ye humble and ye holy men of heart;
And ye! ye ministers and stewards of a Word
Which ye would preach, because another heard—
Ye worshippers of that ye do not know,
Take these things hence and go:—
He is not risen!

Here, on our Easter Day
We rise, we come, and lo! we find Him not,
Gardener nor other, on the sacred spot:
Where they have laid Him there is none to say;
No sound, nor in, nor out—no word
Of where to seek the dead or meet the living Lord.
There is no glistering of an angel's wings,
There is no voice of heavenly clear behest:
Let us go hence, and think upon these things
In silence, which is best.
Is He not risen? No—
But lies and moulders low?
Christ is not risen?

EASTER DAY

(*1849*–1869)

II

So in the sinful streets, abstracted and alone,
I with my secret self held communing of mine own.
So in the southern city spake the tongue
Of one that somewhat overwildly sung,
But in a later hour I sat and heard
Another voice that spake—another graver word.
Weep not, it bade, whatever hath been said,
Though He be dead, He is not dead.
In the true creed
He is yet risen indeed;
Christ is yet risen.

Weep not beside His Tomb,
Ye women unto whom
He was great comfort and yet greater grief;
Nor ye, ye faithful few that wont with Him to roam,
Seek sadly what for Him ye left, go hopeless to your home;
Nor ye despair, ye sharers yet to be of their belief;
Though He be dead, He is not dead,
Nor gone, though fled,
Not lost, though vanishèd;
Though He return not, though
He lies and moulders low;
In the true creed
He is yet risen indeed;
Christ is yet risen.

Sit if ye will, sit down upon the ground,

Yet not to weep and wail, but calmly look around.
Whate'er befell,
Earth is not hell;
Now, too, as when it first began,
Life is yet life, and man is man.
For all that breathe beneath the heaven's high cope,
Joy with grief mixes, with despondence hope.
Hope conquers cowardice, joy grief;
Or at least, faith unbelief.
Though dead, not dead;
Not gone, though fled;
Not lost, though vanishèd.
In the great gospel and true creed,
He is yet risen indeed;
Christ is yet risen.

QUI LABORAT ORAT

(1862)

O only Source of all our light and life
Whom as our truth, our strength, we see and feel,
But whom the hours of mortal moral strife
Alone aright reveal!

Mine inmost soul, before Thee inly brought,
Thy presence owns ineffable, divine;
Chastised each rebel self-encentered thought,
My will adoreth Thine.

With eye down-dropped, if then this earthly mind
Speechless remain, or speechless e'en depart;
Nor seek to see—for what of earthly kind
Can see Thee as Thou art?—

If well-assured 'tis but profanely bold
In thought's abstractest forms to seem to see,
It dare not dare the dread communion hold
In ways unworthy Thee,

O not unowned, thou shalt unnamed forgive,
In worldly walks the prayerless heart prepare;
And if in work its life it seem to live,
Shalt make that work be prayer.

Nor times shall lack, when while the work it plies,
Unsummoned powers the blinding film shall part,
And scarce by happy tears made dim, the eyes
In recognition start.

But, as thou willest, give or e'en forbear
The beatific supersensual sight,
So, with Thy blessing blessed, that humbler prayer
Approach Thee morn and night.

ὕμνος ἄυμνος

(1862)

O Thou whose image in the shrine
Of human spirits dwells divine;
Which from that precinct once conveyed,
To be to outer day displayed,
Doth vanish, part, and leave behind
Mere blank and void of empty mind,
Which wilful fancy seeks in vain
With casual shapes to fill again!

O Thou that in our bosom's shrine
Dost dwell, unknown because divine!
I thought to speak, I thought to say,
"The light is here," "behold the way,"
"The voice was thus," and "thus the word,"
And "thus I saw," and "that I heard,"—
But from the lips that half essayed
The imperfect utterance fell unmade.

O Thou, in that mysterious shrine
Enthroned, as I must say, divine!
I will not frame one thought of what
Thou mayest either be or not.
I will not prate of "thus" and "so,"
And be profane with "yes" and "no,"
Enough that in our soul and heart
Thou, whatsoe'er Thou may'st be, art.

Unseen, secure in that high shrine
Acknowledged present and divine,
I will not ask some upper air,
Some future day to place Thee there;
Nor say, nor yet deny, such men
And women saw Thee thus and then:
Thy name was such, and there or here
To him or her Thou didst appear.

Do only Thou in that dim shrine,
Unknown or known, remain, divine;
There, or if not, at least in eyes
That scan the fact that round them lies,

The hand to sway, the judgment guide,
In sight and sense Thyself divide:
Be Thou but there,—in soul and heart,
I will not ask to feel Thou art.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

(1862)

What we, when face to face we see
The Father of our souls, shall be,
John tells us, doth not yet appear;
Ah! did he tell what we are here!

A mind for thoughts to pass into,
A heart for loves to travel through,
Five senses to detect things near,
Is this the whole that we are here?

Rules baffle instincts—instinct rules,
Wise men are bad—and good are fools,
Facts evil—wishes vain appear,
We cannot go, why are we here?

O may we for assurance' sake,
Some arbitrary judgment take,
And wilfully pronounce it clear,
For this or that 'tis we are here?

Or is it right, and will it do,
To pace the sad confusion through,
And say:—It doth not yet appear,
What we shall be, what we are here?

Ah yet, when all is thought and said,
The heart still overrules the head;
Still what we hope we must believe,
And what is given us receive;

Must still believe, for still we hope
That in a world of larger scope,
What here is faithfully begun
Will be completed, not undone.

My child, we still must think, when we
That ampler life together see,
Some true result will yet appear
Of what we are, together, here.

AH! YET CONSIDER IT AGAIN!

(*1851*–1862)

"Old things need not be therefore true,"
O brother men, nor yet the new;
Ah! still awhile the old thought retain,
And yet consider it again!

The souls of now two thousand years
Have laid up here their toils and fears,
And all the earnings of their pain,—
Ah, yet consider it again!

We! what do we see? each a space
Of some few yards before his face;
Does that the whole wide plan explain?
Ah, yet consider it again!

Alas! the great world goes its way,
And takes its truth from each new day;
They do not quit, nor can retain,
Far less consider it again.

COME HOME, COME HOME

(*1852*–1862)

Come home, come home! and where is
home for me,
Whose ship is driving o'er the trackless
sea?
To the frail bark here plunging on its
way,
To the wild waters, shall I turn and say
To the plunging bark, or to the salt sea
foam,
You are my home?

Fields once I walked in, faces once I
knew,
Familiar things so old my heart believed
them true,
These far, far back, behind me lie, before
The dark clouds mutter, and the deep seas
roar,
And speak to them that 'neath and o'er
them roam
No words of home.

Beyond the clouds, beyond the waves that
roar,
There may indeed, or may not be a shore,
Where fields as green, and hands and
hearts as true,
The old forgotten semblance may renew,
And offer exiles driven far o'er the salt
sea foam
Another home.

But toil and pain must wear out many a
day,
And days bear weeks, and weeks bear
months away,
Ere, if at all, the weary traveller hear,
With accents whispered in his wayworn
ear,

A voice he dares to listen to, say, Come
To thy true home.

Come home, come home! and where a home hath he
Whose ship is driving o'er the driving sea?
Through clouds that mutter, and o'er waves that roar,
Say, shall we find, or shall we not, a shore
That is, as is not ship or ocean foam,
Indeed our home?

GREEN FIELDS OF ENGLAND

(*1852*–1862)

Green fields of England! wheresoe'er
Across this watery waste we fare,
Your image at our hearts we bear,
Green fields of England, everywhere.

Sweet eyes in England, I must flee
Past where the waves' last confines be,
Ere your loved smile I cease to see,
Sweet eyes in England, dear to me.

Dear home in England, safe and fast
If but in thee my lot lie cast,
The past shall seem a nothing past
To thee, dear home, if won at last;
Dear home in England, won at last.

COME BACK, COME BACK

(*1852*–1862)

Come back, come back! behold with straining mast
And swelling sail, behold her steaming fast;
With one new sun to see her voyage o'er,
With morning light to touch her native shore.
Come back! come back.

Come back, come back! while westward laboring by,
With sailless yards, a bare black hulk we fly.
See how the gale we fight with sweeps her back,
To our lost home, on our forsaken track.
Come back, come back.

Come back, come back! across the flying foam,
We hear faint far-off voices call us home:
Come back, ye seem to say; ye seek in vain;
We went, we sought, and homeward turned again.
Come back, come back.

Come back, come back; and whither back or why?
To fan quenched hopes, forsaken schemes to try;
Walk the old fields; pace the familiar street;
Dream with the idlers, with the bards compete.
Come back, come back.

Come back, come back; and whither and for what?
To finger idly some old Gordian knot,
Unskilled to sunder, and too weak to cleave,
And with much toil attain to half-believe.
Come back, come back.

Come back, come back; yea back, indeed, do go
Sighs panting thick, and tears that want to flow;
Fond fluttering hopes upraise their useless wings,
And wishes idly struggling in the strings;
Come back, come back.

Come back, come back, more eager than the breeze,
The flying fancies sweep across the seas,
And lighter far than ocean's flying foam,
The heart's fond message hurries to its home.
Come back, come back.

Come back, come back!
Back flies the foam; the hoisted flag streams back;
The long smoke wavers on the homeward track,
Back fly with winds things which the winds obey,
The strong ship follows its appointed way.

WHERE LIES THE LAND

(*1852*–1862)

Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.

And where the land she travels from? Away.
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

On sunny noons upon the deck's smooth face,
Linked arm in arm, how pleasant here to pace;
Or, o'er the stern reclining, watch below
The foaming wake far widening as we go.

On stormy nights when wild northwesters rave,
How proud a thing to fight with wind and wave!
The dripping sailor on the reeling mast
Exults to bear, and scorns to wish it past.

Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from? Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

WITH WHOM IS NO VARIABLENESS NEITHER SHADOW OF TURNING

(1862)

It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, Truth is so:
That, howsoe'er I stray and range,
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.
I steadier step when I recall
That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

Ite Domum saturæ venit Hesperus

(1862)

The skies have sunk, and hid the upper snow,
(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie)
The rainy clouds are filing fast below,
And wet will be the path, and wet shall we.
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie.

Ah dear, and where is he, a year agone,
Who stepped beside and cheered us on and on?
My sweetheart wanders far away from me,
In foreign land or on a foreign sea.
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie.

The lightning zigzags shoot across the sky,
(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie,)
And through the vale the rains go sweeping by;
Ah me, and when in shelter shall we be?
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie.

Cold, dreary cold, the stormy winds feel they
O'er foreign lands and foreign seas that stray.
(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie.)
And doth he e'er, I wonder, bring to mind
The pleasant huts and herds he left behind?

And doth he sometimes in his slumbering see
The feeding kine, and doth he think of me,
My sweetheart wandering wheresoe'er it be?
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie.

The thunder bellows far from snow to snow,
(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie,)
And loud and louder roars the flood below.
Heigh-ho! but soon in shelter shall we be:
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie.

Or shall he find before his term be sped
Some comelier maid that he shall wish to wed?
(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie.)
For weary is work, and weary day by day
To have your comfort miles on miles away.
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie.

Or may it be that I shall find my mate,
And he returning see himself too late?
For work we must, and what we see, we see,
And God he knows, and what must be, must be,
When sweethearts wander far away from me.
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie.

The sky behind is brightening up anew,
(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie,)
The rain is ending, and our journey too;

Heigh-ho! aha! for here at home are we:—
In, Rose, and in, Provence and La Palie.

WHENCE ARE YE, VAGUE DESIRES

(1862)

Whence are ye, vague desires,
Which carry men along,
However proud and strong;
Which, having ruled to-day,
To-morrow pass away?
Whence are ye, vague desires?
Whence are ye?

Which women, yielding to,
Find still so good and true;
So true, so good to-day,
To-morrow gone away.
Whence are ye, vague desires?
Whence are ye?

From seats of bliss above,
Where angels sing of love;
From subtle airs around,
Or from the vulgar ground,
Whence are ye, vague desires?
Whence are ye?

A message from the blest,
Or bodily unrest;
A call to heavenly good,
A fever in the blood:
What are ye, vague desires?
What are ye?

Which men who know you best
Are proof against the least,
And rushing on to-day,
To-morrow cast away.
What are ye, vague desires?
What are ye?

Which women, ever new,
Still warned, surrender to;
Adored with you to-day,
Then cast with you away,
What are ye, vague desires?
What are ye?

Which unto boyhood's heart
The force of men impart,
And pass, and leave it cold,
And prematurely old.
What are ye, vague desires?
What are ye?

Which, tremblingly confest,
Pour in the young girl's breast
Joy, joy—the like is none,
And leave her then undone—
What are ye, vague desires?
What are ye?

Ah yet! though man be marred,
Ignoble made, and hard;
Though broken women lie
In anguish down to die;
Ah yet, ye vague desires,
Ah yet!

By Him who gave you birth,
And blended you with earth,
Was some good end designed
For man and womankind;
Ah yet! ye vague desires,
Ah yet!

The petals of to-day,
To-morrow fallen away,
Shall something leave instead,
To live when they are dead:
When you, ye vague desires,
Have vanished;

A something to survive,
Of you though it derive
Apparent earthly birth,
But of far other worth
Than you, ye vague desires,
Than you.

OH STREAM, DESCENDING TO THE SEA

(1862)

O stream descending to the sea,
Thy mossy banks between,
The flow'rets blow, the grasses grow,
The leafy trees are green.

In garden plots the children play,
The fields the laborers till,
And houses stand on either hand,
And thou descendest still.

O life descending into death,
Our waking eyes behold,
Parent and friend thy lapse attend,
Companions young and old.

Strong purposes our minds possess,
Our hearts affections fill,
We toil and earn, we seek and learn,
And thou descendest still.

O end to which our currents tend,
  Inevitable sea,
To which we flow, what do we know,
  What shall we guess of thee?

A roar we hear upon thy shore,
  As we our course fulfil;
Scarce we divine a sun will shine
  And be above us still.

PUT FORTH THY LEAF

(1862)

Put forth thy leaf, thou lofty plane,
  East wind and frost are safely gone;
With zephyr mild and balmy rain
  The summer comes serenely on;
Earth, air, and sun and skies combine
  To promise all that's kind and fair:—
But thou, O human heart of mine,
  Be still, contain thyself, and bear.

December days were brief and chill,
  The winds of March were wild and dreary,
And, nearing and receding still,
  Spring never would, we thought, be here.
The leaves that burst, the suns that shine,
  Had, not the less, their certain date:—
And thou, O human heart of mine,
  Be still, refrain thyself, and wait.

COME, POET, COME!

(1862)

Come, Poet, come!
A thousand laborers ply their task,
And what it tends to scarcely ask,
And trembling thinkers on the brink
Shiver, and know not how to think.
To tell the purport of their pain,
And what our silly joys contain;
In lasting lineaments portray
The substance of the shadowy day;
Our real and inner deeds rehearse,
And make our meaning clear in verse:
Come, Poet, come! for but in vain
We do the work or feel the pain,
And gather up the seeming gain,
Unless before the end thou come
To take, ere they are lost, their sum.

Come, Poet, come!
To give an utterance to the dumb,
And make vain babblers silent, come;
A thousand dupes point here and there,
Bewildered by the show and glare;
And wise men half have learned to doubt
Whether we are not best without.
Come, Poet; both but wait to see
Their error proved to them in thee.

Come, Poet, come!
In vain I seem to call. And yet
Think not the living times forget.
Ages of heroes fought and fell
That Homer in the end might tell;
O'er grovelling generations past
Upstood the Doric fane at last;
And countless hearts on countless years
Had wasted thoughts, and hopes, and fears,
Rude laughter and unmeaning tears,
Ere England Shakespeare saw, or Rome
The pure perfection of her dome.
Others, I doubt not, if not we,
The issue of our toils shall see;
Young children gather as their own
The harvest that the dead had sown,
The dead forgotten and unknown.

THE LATEST DECALOGUE

(1862)

Thou shalt have one God only; who
Would be at the expense of two?
No graven images may be
Worshipped, except the currency:
Swear not at all; for, for thy curse
Thine enemy is none the worse:
At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world thy friend:
Honor thy parents; that is, all
From whom advancement may befall:
Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive
Officiously to keep alive:
Do not adultery commit;
Advantage rarely comes of it:
Thou shalt not steal; an empty feat,
When it's so lucrative to cheat:
Bear not false witness; let the lie
Have time on its own wings to fly:
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition
Approves all forms of competition.

LIFE IS STRUGGLE

(1869)

To wear out heart, and nerves, and brain,
And give oneself a world of pain;
Be eager, angry, fierce, and hot,
Imperious, supple—God knows what,
For what's all one to have or not;
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!
For 'tis not joy, it is not gain,

It is not in itself a bliss,
Only it is precisely this
That keeps us all alive.

To say we truly feel the pain,
And quite are sinking with the strain;—
Entirely, simply, undeceived,
Believe, and say we ne'er believed
The object, e'en were it achieved,
A thing we e'er had cared to keep;
With heart and soul to hold it cheap,
And then to go and try it again;
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!
O, 'tis not joy, and 'tis not bliss,
Only it is precisely this
That keeps us still alive.

MATTHEW ARNOLD (1822–1888)

QUIET WORK

(1849)

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,
One lesson which in every wind is blown,
One lesson of two duties kept at one
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity—
Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity!
Of labor, that in lasting fruit outgrows
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in repose,
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry!
Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,
Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting;
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil,
Laborers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

TO A FRIEND

(1849)

Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?—
He much, the old man, who, clearest-soul'd of men,
Saw The Wide Prospect, and the Asian Fen,
And Tmolus hill, and Smyrna bay, though blind.
Much he, whose friendship I not long since won,
That halting slave,[1] who in Nicopolis
Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son
Clear'd Rome of what most shamed him. But be his
My special thanks, whose even-balanced soul,
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor passion wild;
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole;
The mellow glory of the Attic stage,
Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

SHAKESPEARE

(1849)

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honor'd, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at.—Better so!
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

MYCERINUS

(1849)

"After Chephren, Mycerinus, son of Cheops, reigned over Egypt. He abhorred his father's courses, and judged his subjects more justly than any of their Kings had done.—To

1 Epictetus.

him there came an oracle from the city of Buto, to the effect, that he was to live but six years longer, and to die in the seventh year from that time."—HERODOTUS

"Not by the justice that my father spurn'd,
Not for the thousands whom my father slew,
Altars unfed and temples overturn'd,
Cold hearts and thankless tongues, where thanks were due;
Fell this late voice from lips that cannot lie,
Stern sentence of the Powers of Destiny.

I will unfold my sentence and my crime.
My crime, that, rapt in reverential awe,
I sate obedient, in the fiery prime
Of youth, self-govern'd, at the feet of Law;
Ennobling this dull pomp, the life of kings,
By contemplation of diviner things.

My father lov'd injustice, and liv'd long;
Crown'd with grey hairs he died, and full of sway.
I lov'd the good he scorn'd, and hated wrong:
The Gods declare my recompense to-day.
I look'd for life more lasting, rule more high;
And when six years are measur'd, lo, I die!

Yet surely, O my people, did I deem
Man's justice from the all-just Gods was given:
A light that from some upper fount did beam,
Some better archetype, whose seat was heaven;
A light that, shining from the blest abodes,
Did shadow somewhat of the life of Gods.

Mere phantoms of man's self-tormenting heart,
Which on the sweets that woo it dares not feed:
Vain dreams, that quench our pleasures, then depart,
When the dup'd soul, self-master'd, claims its meed:
When, on the strenuous just man, Heaven bestows,
Crown of his struggling life, an unjust close.

Seems it so light a thing then, austere Powers,
To spurn man's common lure, life's pleasant things?
Seems there no joy in dances crown'd with flowers,
Love, free to range, and regal banquetings?
Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmov'd eye,
Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy?
Or is it that some Power, too wise, too strong,
Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,
Whirls earth, and heaven, and men, and gods along,
Like the broad rushing of the insurged Nile?
And the great powers we serve, themselves may be
Slaves of a tyrannous Necessity?

Or in mid-heaven, perhaps, your golden cars,
Where earthly voice climbs never, wing their flight,
And in wild hunt, through mazy tracts of stars,
Sweep in the sounding stillness of the night?
Or in deaf ease, on thrones of dazzling sheen,
Drinking deep draughts of joy, ye dwell serene?

Oh wherefore cheat our youth, if thus it be,
Of one short joy, one lust, one pleasant dream?
Stringing vain words of powers we cannot see,
Blind divinations of a will supreme;
Lost labor: when the circumambient gloom
But hides, if Gods, Gods careless of our doom?

The rest I give to Joy. Even while I speak
My sand runs short; and as yon star-shot ray,
Hemm'd by two banks of cloud, peers pale and weak,
Now, as the barrier closes, dies away;
Even so do past and future intertwine,
Blotting this six years' space, which yet is mine.

Six years—six little years—six drops of time—
Yet suns shall rise, and many moons shall wane,

And old men die, and young men pass their prime,
And languid Pleasure fade and flower again;
And the dull Gods behold, ere these are flown,
Revels more deep, joy keener than their own.

Into the silence of the groves and woods
I will go forth; but something would I say—
Something—yet what I know not: for the Gods
The doom they pass revoke not, nor delay;
And prayers, and gifts, and tears, are fruitless all,
And the night waxes, and the shadows fall.

Ye men of Egypt, ye have heard your king.
I go, and I return not. But the will
Of the great Gods is plain; and ye must bring
Ill deeds, ill passions, zealous to fulfil
Their pleasure, to their feet; and reap their praise
The praise of Gods, rich boon! and length of days."

—So spake he, half in anger, half in scorn;
And one loud cry of grief and of amaze
Broke from his sorrowing people: so he spake;
And turning, left them there; and with brief pause,
Girt with a throng of revellers, bent his way
To the cool region of the groves he lov'd.

There by the river banks he wander'd on,
From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy trees,
Their smooth tops shining sunwards, and beneath
Burying their unsunn'd stems in grass and flowers:
Where in one dream the feverish time of Youth
Might fade in slumber, and the feet of Joy
Might wander all day long and never tire:
Here came the king, holding high feast, at morn,
Rose-crown'd; and ever, when the sun went down,
A hundred lamps beam'd in the tranquil gloom,
From tree to tree, all through the twinkling grove,
Revealing all the tumult of the feast,
Flush'd guests, and golden goblets, foam'd with wine;
While the deep-burnish'd foliage overhead
Splinter'd the silver arrows of the moon.
It may be that sometimes his wondering soul
From the loud joyful laughter of his lips
Might shrink half startled, like a guilty man
Who wrestles with his dream; as some pale Shape,
Gliding half hidden through the dusky stems,
Would thrust a hand before the lifted bowl,
Whispering, "A little space, and thou art mine."
It may be on that joyless feast his eye
Dwelt with mere outward seeming; he, within,
Took measure of his soul, and knew its strength,
And by that silent knowledge, day by day,
Was calm'd, ennobled, comforted, sustain'd.
It may be; but not less his brow was smooth,
And his clear laugh fled ringing through the gloom,
And his mirth quail'd not at the mild reproof
Sigh'd out by Winter's sad tranquillity;
Nor, pall'd with its own fulness, ebb'd and died
In the rich languor of long summer days;
Nor wither'd, when the palm-tree plumes that roof'd
With their mild dark his grassy banquet-hall,
Bent to the cold winds of the showerless Spring;
No, nor grew dark when Autumn brought the clouds.
So six long years he revell'd, night and day;
And when the mirth wax'd loudest, with dull sound
Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes came,
To tell his wondering people of their king;

In the still night, across the steaming flats,
Mix'd with the murmur of the moving Nile.

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

(1849)

HUSSEIN

O most just Vizier, send away
The cloth-merchants, and let them be,
Them and their dues, this day: the King
Is ill at ease, and calls for thee.

THE VIZIER

O merchants, tarry yet a day
Here in Bokhara: but at noon
To-morrow, come and ye shall pay
Each fortieth web of cloth to me,
As the law is, and go your way.
O Hussein, lead me to the King.
Thou teller of sweet tales, thine own,
Ferdousi's, and the others', lead.
How is it with my lord?

HUSSEIN

Alone
Ever since prayer-time, he doth wait,
O Vizier, without lying down,
In the great window of the gate,
Looking into the Registàn:
Where through the sellers' booths the slaves
Are this way bringing the dead man.
O Vizier, here is the King's door.

THE KING

O Vizier, I may bury him?

THE VIZIER

O King, thou know'st, I have been sick
These many days, and heard no thing,
(For Allah shut my ears and mind)
Not even what thou dost, O King.
Wherefore, that I may counsel thee,
Let Hussein, if thou wilt, make haste
To speak in order what hath chanc'd.

THE KING

O Vizier, be it as thou say'st.

HUSSEIN

Three days since, at the time of prayer,
A certain Moollah, with his robe
All rent, and dust upon his hair,
Watch'd my lord's coming forth, and push'd
The golden mace-bearers aside,
And fell at the King's feet, and cried,

"Justice, O King, and on myself!
On this great sinner, who hath broke
The law, and by the law must die!
Vengeance, O King!"

But the King spoke:
"What fool is this, that hurts our ears
With folly? or what drunken slave?
My guards what, prick him with your spears!
Prick me the fellow from the path!"
As the King said, so was it done,
And to the mosque my lord pass'd on.

But on the morrow, when the King
Went forth again, the holy book
Carried before him, as is right,
And through the square his path he took;

My man comes running, fleck'd with blood
From yesterday, and falling down
Cries out most earnestly: "O King.
My lord, O King, do right, I pray!

"How canst thou, ere thou hear, discern
If I speak folly? but a king,
Whether a thing be great or small,
Like Allah, hears and judges all.

"Wherefore hear thou! Thou know'st, how fierce
In these last days the sun hath burn'd:
That the green water in the tanks
Is to a putrid puddle turn'd:
And the canal, that from the stream
Of Samarcand is brought this way
Wastes, and runs thinner every day.

"Now I at nightfall had gone forth
Alone, and in a darksome place
Under some mulberry trees I found
A little pool; and in brief space
With all the water that was there
I fill'd my pitcher, and stole home
Unseen: and having drink to spare,
I hid the can behind the door,
And went up on the roof to sleep.

"But in the night, which was with wind
And burning dust, again I creep
Down, having fever, for a drink.

"Now meanwhile had my brethren found
The water-pitcher, where it stood
Behind the door upon the ground,
And call'd my mother: and they all,
As they were thirsty, and the night
Most sultry, drain'd the pitcher there;
That they sate with it, in my sight,
Their lips still wet, when I came down.

"Now mark! I, being fever'd sick,
(Most unblest also) at that sight
Brake forth and curs'd them—dost thou hear?—
One was my mother—Now, do right!"

But my lord mus'd a space, and said:
"Send him away, Sirs, and make on.
It is some madman," the King said:
As the King said, so was it done.

The morrow at the self-same hour
In the King's path, behold, the man,
Not kneeling, sternly fix'd: he stood
Right opposite, and thus began,
Frowning grim down:—"Thou wicked King,
Most deaf where thou shouldst most give ear!
What, must I howl in the next world,
Because thou wilt not listen here?

"What, wilt thou pray, and get thee grace,
And all grace shall to me be grudg'd?
Nay, but I swear, from this thy path
I will not stir till I be judg'd."

Then they who stood about the King
Drew close together and conferr'd:
Till that the King stood forth and said,
"Before the priests thou shalt be heard."

But when the Ulemas were met
And the thing heard, they doubted not;
But sentenc'd him, as the law is,
To die by stoning on the spot.

Now the King charg'd us secretly:
"Ston'd must he be, the law stands so:
Yet, if he seek to fly, give way:
Forbid him not, but let him go."

So saying, the King took a stone,
And cast it softly: but the man,
With a great joy upon his face,
Kneel'd down, and cried not, neither ran.

So they, whose lot it was, cast stones;
That they flew thick, and bruis'd him sore:
But he prais'd Allah with loud voice,
And remain'd kneeling as before.

My lord had covered up his face:
But when one told him, "He is dead,"
Turning him quickly to go in,
"Bring thou to me his corpse," he said.

And truly, while I speak, O King,
I hear the bearers on the stair.
Wilt thou they straightway bring him in?
—Ho! enter ye who tarry there!

THE VIZIER

O King, in this I praise thee not.
Now must I call thy grief not wise.
Is he thy friend, or of thy blood,
To find such favor in thine eyes?

Nay, were he thine own mother's son,
Still, thou art king, and the Law stands.
It were not meet the balance swerv'd,
The sword were broken in thy hands.

But being nothing, as he is,
Why for no cause make sad thy face?
Lo, I am old: three kings, ere thee,
Have I seen reigning in this place.

But who, through all this length of time,
Could bear the burden of his years,
If he for strangers pain'd his heart
Not less than those who merit tears?

Fathers we *must* have, wife and child;
And grievous is the grief for these:
This pain alone, which *must* be borne,
Makes the head white, and bows the knees.

But other loads than this his own
One man is not well made to bear.
Besides, to each are his own friends,
To mourn with him, and show him care.

Look, this is but one single place,
Though it be great; all the earth round,
If a man bear to have it so,
Things which might vex him shall be found.

Upon the Russian frontier, where
The watchers of two armies stand
Near one another, many a man,
Seeking a prey unto his hand,

Hath snatch'd a little fair-hair'd slave:
They snatch also, towards Mervè,

The Shiah dogs, who pasture sheep,
And up from thence to Orgunjè.

And these all, laboring for a lord,
Eat not the fruit of their own hands:
Which is the heaviest of all plagues,
To that man's mind, who understands.

The kaffirs also (whom God curse!)
Vex one another, night and day:
There are the lepers, and all sick:
There are the poor, who faint alway.

All these have sorrow, and keep still,
Whilst other men make cheer, and sing.
Wilt thou have pity on all these?
No, nor on this dead dog, O King!

THE KING

O Vizier, thou art old, I young.
Clear in these things I cannot see.
My head is burning; and a heat
Is in my skin, which angers me.

But hear ye this, ye sons of men!
They that bear rule, and are obey'd,
Unto a rule more strong than theirs
Are in their turn obedient made.

In vain therefore, with wistful eyes
Gazing up hither, the poor man,
Who loiters by the high-heap'd booths,
Below there, in the Registàn,

Says, "Happy he, who lodges there!
With silken raiment, store of rice,
And for this drought, all kinds of fruits,
Grape syrup, squares of color'd ice,

With cherries serv'd in drifts of snow."
In vain hath a king power to build
Houses, arcades, enamell'd mosques;
And to make orchard closes, fill'd

With curious fruit trees, bought from far;
With cisterns for the winter rain;
And in the desert, spacious inns
In divers places;—if that pain

Is not more lighten'd, which he feels,
If his will be not satisfied:
And that it be not, from all time
The Law is planted, to abide.

Thou wert a sinner, thou poor man!
Thou wert athirst; and didst not see,
That, though we snatch what we desire,
We must not snatch it eagerly.

And I have meat and drink at will,
And rooms of treasures, not a few.
But I am sick, nor heed I these:
And what I would, I cannot do.

Even the great honor which I have,
When I am dead, will soon grow still.
So have I neither joy, nor fame.
But what I can do, that I will.

I have a fretted brick-work tomb
Upon a hill on the right hand,
Hard by a close of apricots,
Upon the road of Samarcand.

Thither, O Vizier, will I bear
This man my pity could not save:
And, tearing up the marble flags,
There lay his body in my grave.

Bring water, nard, and linen rolls.
Wash off all blood, set smooth each limb,
Then say: "He was not wholly vile,
Because a king shall bury him."

WRITTEN IN EMERSON'S ESSAYS

(1849)

"O monstrous, dead, unprofitable world,
That thou canst hear, and hearing, hold thy way.
A voice oracular hath peal'd to-day,
To-day a hero's banner is unfurl'd.
Hast thou no lip for welcome?" So I said.
Man after man, the world smil'd and pass'd by:
A smile of wistful incredulity
As though one spake of noise unto the dead:
Scornful, and strange, and sorrowful; and full
Of bitter knowledge. Yet the Will is free:
Strong is the Soul, and wise, and beautiful:
The seeds of godlike power are in us still:
Gods are we, Bards, Saints, Heroes, if we will.—
Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery?

TO AN INDEPENDENT PREACHER

WHO PREACHED THAT WE SHOULD BE "IN HARMONY WITH NATURE"

(1849)

"In harmony with Nature?" Restless fool,
Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,
When true, the last impossibility;
To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool:—
Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,
And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.
Nature is cruel; man is sick of blood:
Nature is stubborn; man would fain adore:
Nature is fickle; man hath need of rest:
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave:
Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.
Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!

TO FAUSTA

(1849)

Joy comes and goes: hope ebbs and flows,
Like the wave.
Change doth unknit the tranquil strength of men.
Love lends life a little grace,
A few sad smiles: and then,
Both are laid in one cold place,
In the grave.

Dreams dawn and fly: friends smile and die,
Like spring flowers.
Our vaunted life is one long funeral.
Men dig graves, with bitter tears,
For their dead hopes; and all,
Maz'd with doubts, and sick with fears,
Count the hours.

We count the hours: these dreams of ours,
False and hollow,
Shall we go hence and find they are not dead?
Joys we dimly apprehend
Faces that smil'd and fled,
Hopes born here, and born to end,
Shall we follow?

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

(1849)

Come, dear children, let us away;
Down and away below.
Now my brothers call from the bay;
Now the great winds shorewards blow;
Now the salt tides seaward flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away.
This way, this way.
Call her once before you go—
Call once yet!
In a voice that she will know:
"Margaret! Margaret!"
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear;
Children's voices, wild with pain—
Surely she will come again!
Call her once and come away;
This way, this way!
"Mother dear, we cannot stay.
The wild white horses foam and fret."
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;
Call no more!
One last look at the white-wall'd town,
And the little gray church on the windy shore,
Then come down!
She will not come though you call all day;
Come away, come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,

Round the world for ever and aye?
When did music come this way?
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate on her knee.
She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea;
She said: "I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little gray church on the shore to-day.
'T will be Easter-time in the world—ah me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee."
I said: "Go up, dear heart, through the waves;
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves!"
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
"The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan;
Long prayers," I said, "in the world they say;
Come!" I said: and we rose through the surf in the bay.
We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town;
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,
To the little gray church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.
We climb'd on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.
She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
"Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!
Dear heart," I said, "we are long alone;
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."
But, ah, she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book!
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more!
Come away, come down, call no more!

Down, down, down!
Down to the depths of the sea!
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark what she sings: "O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with its toy!
For the priest and the bell, and the holy well;
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun!"
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the spindle drops from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
And over the sand at the sea;
And her eyes are set in a stare;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden.
A long, long sigh;
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children;
Come children, come down!
The hoarse wind blows coldly;
Lights shine in the town.
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing: "Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she!
And alone dwell for ever
The kings of the sea."

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow,
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring tides are low;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starr'd with broom,

And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanch'd sands a gloom;
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town;
At the church on the hill-side—
And then come back down.
Singing: "There dwells a loved one,
But cruel is she!
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea."

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

(1852)

"In the court of his uncle King Marc, the king of Cornwall, who at this time resided at the castle of Tyntagel, Tristram became expert in all knightly exercises.—The king of Ireland, at Tristram's solicitations, promised to bestow his daughter Iseult in marriage on King Marc. The mother of Iseult gave to her daughter's confidante a philtre, or love-potion, to be administered on the night of her nuptials. Of this beverage Tristram and Iseult, on their voyage to Cornwall, unfortunately partook. Its influence, during the remainder of their lives, regulated the affections and destiny of the lovers.—

"After the arrival of Tristram and Iseult, in Cornwall, and the nuptials of the latter with King Marc, a great part of the romance is occupied with their contrivances to procure secret interviews.—Tristram, being forced to leave Cornwall, on account of the displeasure of his uncle, repaired to Brittany, where lived Iseult with the White Hands.—He married her—more out of gratitude than love.—Afterwards he proceeded to the dominions of Arthur, which became the theatre of unnumbered exploits.

"Tristram, subsequent to these events, returned to Brittany, and to his long-neglected wife. There, being wounded and sick, he was soon reduced to the lowest ebb. In this situation, he dispatched a confidant to the queen of Cornwall, to try if he could induce her to follow him to Brittany," &c.—DUNLOP'S *History of Fiction.*

I

TRISTRAM

Is she not come? The messenger was sure.
Prop me upon the pillows once again—
Raise me, my Page: this cannot long endure.
Christ! what a night! how the sleet whips the pane!
What lights will those out to the northward be?

THE PAGE

The lanterns of the fishing-boats at sea.

TRISTRAM

Soft—who is that stands by the dying fire?

THE PAGE

Iseult.

TRISTRAM

Ah! not the Iseult I desire.

. . . . . .

What Knight is this, so weak and pale,
Though the locks are yet brown on his noble head,
Propt on pillows in his bed,
Gazing seawards for the light
Of some ship that fights the gale
On this wild December night?
Over the sick man's feet is spread
A dark green forest dress.
A gold harp leans against the bed,
Ruddy in the fire's light.
I know him by his harp of gold,
Famous in Arthur's court of old:
I know him by his forest dress.
The peerless hunter, harper, knight—
Tristram of Lyoness.

What Lady is this, whose silk attire
Gleams so rich in the light of the fire?
The ringlets on her shoulders lying
In their flitting lustre vying
With the clasp of burnish'd gold
Which her heavy robe doth hold.
Her looks are mild, her fingers slight
As the driven snow are white;
And her cheeks are sunk and pale.
Is it that the bleak sea-gale
Beating from the Atlantic sea
On this coast of Brittany,
Nips too keenly the sweet Flower?
Is it that a deep fatigue
Hath come on her, a chilly fear,
Passing all her youthful hour
Spinning with her maidens here,

Listlessly through the window bars
Gazing seawards many a league
From her lonely shore-built tower,
While the knights are at the wars?
Or, perhaps, has her young heart
Felt already some deeper smart,
Of those that in secret the heart-strings rive,
Leaving her sunk and pale, though fair?
Who is this snowdrop by the sea?
I know her by her mildness rare,
Her snow-white hands, her golden hair;
I know her by her rich silk dress,
And her fragile loveliness.
The sweetest Christian soul alive,
Iseult of Brittany.

Iseult of Brittany?—but where
Is that other Iseult fair,
That proud, first Iseult, Cornwall's queen?
She, whom Tristram's ship of yore
From Ireland to Cornwall bore,
To Tyntagel, to the side
Of King Marc, to be his bride?
She who, as they voyag'd, quaff'd
With Tristram that spic'd magic draught,
Which since then for ever rolls
Through their blood, and binds their souls,
Working love, but working teen?—
There were two Iseults, who did sway
Each her hour of Tristram's day;
But one possess'd his waning time,
The other his resplendent prime.
Behold her here, the patient Flower,
Who possess'd his darker hour.
Iseult of the Snow-White Hand
Watches pale by Tristram's bed.—
She is here who had his gloom,
Where art thou who hadst his bloom?
One such kiss as those of yore
Might thy dying knight restore—
Does the love-draught work no more?
Art thou cold, or false, or dead,
Iseult of Ireland?

Loud howls the wind, sharp patters the rain,
And the knight sinks back on his pillows again.
He is weak with fever and pain,
And his spirit is not clear.
Hark! he mutters in his sleep,
As he wanders far from here,
Changes place and time of year,
And his closèd eye doth sweep
O'er some fair unwintry sea,
Not this fierce Atlantic deep,
As he mutters brokenly—

TRISTRAM

The calm sea shines, loose hang the vessel's sails—
Before us are the sweet green fields of Wales,
And overhead the cloudless sky of May.—
"Ah, would I were in those green fields at play,
Not pent on ship-board this delicious day.
Tristram, I pray thee, of thy courtesy,
Reach me my golden cup that stands by thee,
And pledge me in it first for courtesy.—"
—Ha! dost thou start? are thy lips blanch'd like mine?
Child, 'tis no water this, 'tis poison'd wine.—
Iseult! . . .
Ah, sweet angels, let him dream!
Keep his eyelids! let him seem
Not this fever-wasted wight
Thinn'd and pal'd before his time,
But the brilliant youthful knight
In the glory of his prime,
Sitting in the gilded barge,
At thy side, thou lovely charge!
Bending gaily o'er thy hand,
Iseult of Ireland!
And she too, that princess fair,
If her bloom be now less rare,
Let her have her youth again—
Let her be as she was then!
Let her have her proud dark eyes,
And her petulant quick replies,
Let her sweep her dazzling hand
With its gesture of command,
And shake back her raven hair
With the old imperious air.
As of old, so let her be,
That first Iseult, princess bright,
Chatting with her youthful knight
As he steers her o'er the sea,
Quitting at her father's will
The green isle where she was bred,
And her bower in Ireland,
For the surge-beat Cornish strand,
Where the prince whom she must wed
Dwells on proud Tyntagel's hill,
Fast beside the sounding sea.
And that golden cup her mother
Gave her, that her future lord,
Gave her, that King Marc and she,
Might drink it on their marriage day,
And for ever love each other,
Let her, as she sits on board,
Ah, sweet saints, unwittingly,
See it shine, and take it up,

And to Tristram laughing say—
"Sir Tristram, of thy courtesy,
Pledge me in my golden cup!"
Let them drink it—let their hands
Tremble, and their cheeks be flame,
As they feel the fatal bands
Of a love they dare not name,
With a wild delicious pain,
Twine about their hearts again.
Let the early summer be
Once more round them, and the sea
Blue, and o'er its mirror kind
Let the breath of the May wind,
Wandering through their drooping sails,
Die on the green fields of Wales.
Let a dream like this restore
What his eye must see no more.

TRISTRAM

Chill blows the wind, the pleasaunce walks are drear.
Madcap, what jest was this, to meet me here?
Were feet like those made for so wild a way?
The southern winter-parlor, by my fay,
Had been the likeliest trysting-place to-day.
"Tristram!—nay, nay—thou must not take my hand—
Tristram—sweet love—we are betray'd—out-plann'd.
Fly—save thyself—save me. I dare not stay."—
One last kiss first!—*"'Tis vain—to horse——away!"*

. . . . . .

Ah, sweet saints, his dream doth move
Faster surely than it should,
From the fever in his blood.
All the spring-time of his love
Is already gone and past,
And instead thereof is seen
Its winter, which endureth still—
Tyntagel on its surge-beat hill,
The pleasaunce walks, the weeping queen,
The flying leaves, the straining blast,
And that long, wild kiss—their last.
And this rough December night
And his burning fever pain
Mingle with his hurrying dream
Till they rule it, till he seem
The press'd fugitive again,
The love-desperate banish'd knight
With a fire in his brain
Flying o'er the stormy main.
Whither does he wander now?
Haply in his dreams the wind
Wafts him here, and lets him find
The lovely Orphan Child again
In her castle by the coast,
The youngest, fairest chatelaine,
That this realm of France can boast,
Our Snowdrop by the Atlantic sea,
Iseult of Brittany.
And—for through the haggard air,
The stain'd arms, the matted hair
Of that stranger knight ill-starr'd,
There gleam'd something that recall'd
The Tristram who in better days
Was Launcelot's guest at Joyous Gard—
Welcom'd here, and here install'd,
Tended of his fever here,
Haply he seems again to move
His young guardian's heart with love;
In his exil'd loneliness,
In his stately deep distress,
Without a word, without a tear. —
Ah, 'tis well he should retrace
His tranquil life in this lone place;
His gentle bearing at the side
Of his timid youthful bride;
His long rambles by the shore
On winter evenings, when the roar
Of the near waves came, sadly grand,
Through the dark, up the drown'd sand:
Or his endless reveries
In the woods, where the gleams play
On the grass under the trees,
Passing the long summer's day
Idle as a mossy stone
In the forest depths alone;
The chase neglected, and his hound
Couch'd beside him on the ground.—
Ah, what trouble's on his brow?
Hither let him wander now,
Hither, to the quiet hours
Pass'd among these heaths of ours
By the grey Atlantic sea.
Hours, if not of ecstasy,
From violent anguish surely free.

TRISTRAM

All red with blood the whirling river flows,
The wide plain rings, the daz'd air throbs with blows.
Upon us are the chivalry of Rome—
Their spears are down, their steeds are bath'd in foam.
"Up, Tristram, up," men cry, "thou moon-struck knight!

What foul fiend rides thee? On into the fight!"—
Above the din her voice is in my ears—
I see her form glide through the crossing spears.—
Iseult! . . .

. . . . . .

Ah, he wanders forth again;
We cannot keep him; now as then
There's a secret in his breast
That will never let him rest.
These musing fits in the green wood
They cloud the brain, they dull the blood.
His sword is sharp—his horse is good—
Beyond the mountains will he see
The famous towns of Italy,
And label with the blessed sign
The heathen Saxons on the Rhine.
At Arthur's side he fights once more
With the Roman Emperor.
There's many a gay knight where he goes
Will help him to forget his care.
The march—the leaguer—Heaven's blithe air—
The neighing steeds—the ringing blows;
Sick pining comes not where these are.
Ah, what boots it, that the jest
Lightens every other brow,
What, that every other breast
Dances as the trumpets blow,
If one's own heart beats not light
On the waves of the toss'd fight,
If oneself cannot get free
From the clog of misery?
Thy lovely youthful Wife grows pale
Watching by the salt sea tide
With her children at her side
For the gleam of thy white sail.
Home, Tristram, to thy halls again!
To our lonely sea complain,
To our forests tell thy pain.

TRISTRAM

All round the forest sweeps off, black in shade,
But it is moonlight in the open glade:
And in the bottom of the glade shine clear
The forest chapel and the fountain near.
I think, I have a fever in my blood:
Come, let me leave the shadow of this wood,
Ride down, and bathe my hot brow in the flood.
Mild shines the cold spring in the moon's clear light.
God! 'tis *her* face plays in the waters bright.—
"Fair love," she says, "canst thou forget so soon,
At this soft hour, under this sweet moon?"
Iseult! . . .

. . . . . .

Ah poor soul, if this be so,
Only death can balm thy woe.
The solitudes of the green wood
Had no medicine for thy mood.
The rushing battle clear'd thy blood
As little as did solitude.
Ah, his eyelids slowly break
Their hot seals, and let him wake.
What new change shall we now see?
A happier? Worse it cannot be.

TRISTRAM

Is my Page here? Come, turn me to the fire.
Upon the window panes the moon shines bright;
The wind is down: but she'll not come to-night.
Ah no—she is asleep in Cornwall now,
Far hence—her dreams are fair—smooth is her brow.
Of me she recks not, nor my vain desire.
I have had dreams, I have had dreams, my Page,
Would take a score years from a strong man's age,
And with a blood like mine, will leave, I fear,
Scant leisure for a second messenger.
My Princess, art thou there? Sweet, 'tis too late.
To bed, and sleep: my fever is gone by:
To-night my Page shall keep me company.
Where do the children sleep? kiss them for me.
Poor child, thou art almost as pale as I:
This comes of nursing long and watching late.
To bed—good night!

. . . . . .

She left the gleam-lit fire-place,
She came to the bed-side.
She took his hands in hers: her tears

Down on her slender fingers rain'd.
She rais'd her eyes upon his face—
Not with a look of wounded pride,
A look as if the heart complain'd:—
  Her look was like a sad embrace;
The gaze of one who can divine
A grief, and sympathise.
Sweet Flower, thy children's eyes
  Are not more innocent than thine.
  But they sleep in sheltered rest,
Like helpless birds in the warm nest,
On the Castle's southern side;
Where feebly comes the mournful roar
Of buffeting wind and surging tide
Through many a room and corridor.
Full on their window the Moon's ray
Makes their chamber as bright as day;
It shines upon the blank white walls,
And on the snowy pillow falls,
And on two angel heads doth play
Turn'd to each other:—the eyes clos'd—
  The lashes on the cheeks repos'd.
Round each sweet brow the cap close set
Hardly lets peep the golden hair;
Through the soft-open'd lips the air
Scarcely moves the coverlet.
One little wandering arm is thrown
At random on the counterpane,
And often the fingers close in haste
As if their baby owner chas'd
The butterflies again.
This stir they have and this alone;
But else they are so still.
Ah, tired madcaps, you lie still.
But were you at the window now
To look forth on the fairy sight
Of your illumin'd haunts by night;
To see the park-glades where you play
Far lovelier than they are by day:
To see the sparkle on the eaves,
And upon every giant bough
Of those old oaks, whose wet red leaves
Are jewell'd with bright drops of rain—
  How would your voices run again!
And far beyond the sparkling trees
Of the castle park one sees
The bare heaths spreading, clear as day,
Moor behind moor, far, far away,
Into the heart of Brittany.
And here and there, lock'd by the land,
Long inlets of smooth glittering sea,
And many a stretch of watery sand
All shining in the white moon-beams.
But you see fairer in your dreams.
What voices are these on the clear night air?
What lights in the court? what steps on the stair?

II

ISEULT OF IRELAND

Tristram

Raise the light, my Page, that I may see her.—
Thou art come at last then, haughty Queen!
Long I've waited, long I've fought my fever:
Late thou comest, cruel thou hast been.

Iseult

Blame me not, poor sufferer, that I tarried:
I was bound, I could not break the band.
Chide not with the past, but feel the present:
I am here—we meet—I hold thy hand.

Tristram

Thou art come, indeed—thou hast rejoin'd me;
Thou hast dar'd it: but too late to save.
Fear not now that men should tax thy honor.
I am dying: build—(thou may'st)—my grave!

Iseult

Tristram, for the love of Heaven, speak kindly!
What, I hear these bitter words from thee?
Sick with grief I am, and faint with travel—
Take my hand—dear Tristram, look on me!

Tristram

I forgot, thou comest from thy voyage.
Yes, the spray is on thy cloak and hair.
But thy dark eyes are not dimm'd, proud Iseult!
And thy beauty never was more fair.

Iseult

Ah, harsh flatterer! let alone my beauty.
I, like thee, have left my youth afar.
Take my hand, and touch these wasted fingers—
See my cheek and lips, how white they are.

TRISTRAM

Thou art paler:—but thy sweet charm, Iseult!
Would not fade with the dull years away.
Ah, how fair thou standest in the moonlight!
I forgive thee, Iseult!—thou wilt stay?

ISEULT

Fear me not, I will be always with thee;
I will watch thee, tend thee, soothe thy pain;
Sing thee tales of true long-parted lovers
Join'd at evening of their days again.

TRISTRAM

No, thou shalt not speak; I should be finding
Something alter'd in thy courtly tone.
Sit—sit by me: I will think, we've lived so
In the greenwood, all our lives, alone.

ISEULT

Alter'd, Tristram? Not in courts, believe me,
Love like mine is alter'd in the breast.
Courtly life is light and cannot reach it.
Ah, it lives, because so deep suppress'd.

Royal state with Marc, my deep-wrong'd husband—
That was bliss to make my sorrow flee!
Silken courtiers whispering honied nothings—
Those were friends to make me false to thee!

What, thou think'st, men speak in courtly chambers
Words by which the wretched are consol'd?
What, thou think'st, this aching brow was cooler,
Circled, Tristram, by a band of gold?

Ah, on which, if both our lots were balanc'd,
Was indeed the heaviest burden thrown,
Thee, a weeping exile in thy forest—
Me, a smiling queen upon my throne?

Vain and strange debate, where both have suffer'd;
Both have passed a youth constrain'd and sad;
Both have brought their anxious day to evening,
And have now short space for being glad.

Join'd we are henceforth: nor will thy people
Nor thy younger Iseult take it ill,
That a former rival shares her office,
When she sees her humbled, pale, and still.

I, a faded watcher by thy pillow,
I, a statue on thy chapel floor,
Pour'd in grief before the Virgin Mother,
Rouse no anger, make no rivals more.

She will cry—"Is this the foe I dreaded?
This his idol? this that royal bride?
Ah, an hour of health would purge his eyesight:
Stay, pale queen! for ever by my side."

Hush, no words! that smile, I see, forgives me.
I am now thy nurse, I bid thee sleep.
Close thine eyes—this flooding moonlight blinds them—
Nay, all's well again: thou must not weep.

TRISTRAM

I am happy: yet I feel, there's something
Swells my heart, and takes my breath away:
Through a mist I see thee: near!—come nearer!
Bend—bend down—I yet have much to say.

ISEULT

Heaven! his head sinks back upon the pillow!—
Tristram! Tristram! let thy heart not fail.
Call on God and on the holy angels!
What, love, courage!—Christ! he is so pale.

TRISTRAM

Hush, 'tis vain, I feel my end approaching.
This is what my mother said should be,
When the fierce pains took her in the forest,
The deep draughts of death, in bearing me.

"Son," she said, "thy name shall be of sorrow!
Tristram art thou call'd for my death's sake!"
So she said, and died in the drear forest.
Grief since then his home with me doth make.

I am dying.—Start not, nor look wildly!
Me, thy living friend, thou canst not save.
But, since living we were ununited,
Go not far, O Iseult! from my grave.

Rise, go hence, and seek the princess Iseult:
Speak her fair, she is of royal blood.
Say, I charg'd her, that ye live together:—
She will grant it—she is kind and good.

Now to sail the seas of Death I leave thee;
One last kiss upon the living shore!

ISEULT

Tristram!—Tristram!—stay—receive me with thee!
Iseult leaves thee, Tristram, never more.

. . . . . .

You see them clear: the moon shines bright.
Slow—slow and softly, where she stood,
She sinks upon the ground: her hood
Had fallen back: her arms outspread
Still hold her lover's hands: her head
Is bow'd, half-buried, on the bed.
O'er the blanch'd sheet her raven hair
Lies in disorder'd streams; and there,
Strung like white stars, the pearls still are,
And the golden bracelets heavy and rare
Flash on her white arms still.
The very same which yesternight
Flash'd in the silver sconces' light,
When the feast was gay and the laughter loud
In Tyntagel's palace proud.
But then they deck'd a restless ghost
With hot-flush'd cheeks and brilliant eyes,
And quivering lips on which the tide
Of courtly speech abruptly died,
And a glance that over the crowded floor,
The dancers, and the festive host,
Flew ever to the door.
That the knights eyed her in surprise,
And the dames whisper'd scoffingly—
"Her moods, good lack, they pass like showers!
But yesternight and she would be
As pale and still as wither'd flowers,
And now to-night she laughs and speaks
And has a color in her cheeks.
Christ keep us from such fantasy!"—
The air of the December night
Steals coldly around the chamber bright,
Where those lifeless lovers be.
Swinging with it, in the light
Shines the ghostlike tapestry.
And on the arras wrought you see
A stately Huntsman, clad in green,
And round him a fresh forest scene.
On that clear forest knoll he stays
With his pack round him, and delays.
He stares and stares, with troubled face,
At this huge gleam-lit fireplace,
At the bright iron-figur'd door,
And those blown rushes on the floor.
He gazes down into the room
With heated cheeks and flurried air,
And to himself he seems to say—
"What place is this, and who are they?
Who is that kneeling Lady fair?
And on his pillows that pale Knight
Who seems of marble on a tomb?
How comes it here, this chamber bright,
Through whose mullion'd windows clear
The castle court all wet with rain,
The drawbridge, and the moat appear,
And then the beach, and mark'd with spray
The sunken reefs, and far away
The unquiet bright Atlantic plain?—
What, has some glamour made me sleep,
And sent me with my dogs to sweep,
By night, with boisterous bugle peal,
Through some old, sea-side, knightly hall,
Not in the free greenwood at all?
That Knight's asleep, and at her prayer
That Lady by the bed doth kneel:
Then hush, thou boisterous bugle peal!"—
The wild boar rustles in his lair—
The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air—
But lord and hounds keep rooted there.

Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,
O Hunter! and without a fear
Thy golden-tassell'd bugle blow,
And through the glades thy pastime take!
For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here.
For these thou seest are unmov'd;
Cold, cold as those who liv'd and lov'd
A thousand years ago.

III

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

A year had flown, and o'er the sea away,
In Cornwall, Tristram and Queen Iseult lay;
In King Marc's chapel, in Tyntagel old:
There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.
The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,
Had wander'd forth: her children were at play
In a green circular hollow in the heath
Which borders the sea-shore; a country path
Creeps over it from the till'd fields behind.
The hollow's grassy banks are soft inclin'd,
And to one standing on them, far and near
The lone unbroken view spreads bright and clear
Over the waste:—This cirque of open ground
Is light and green; the heather, which all round
Creeps thickly, grows not here; but the pale grass
Is strewn with rocks, and many a shiver'd mass
Of vein'd white-gleaming quartz, and here and there
Dotted with holly trees and juniper.
In the smooth centre of the opening stood
Three hollies side by side, and made a screen
Warm with the winter sun, of burnish'd green,
With scarlet berries gemm'd, the fell-fare's food.
Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands
Watching her children play: their little hands
Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and streams
Of stagshorn for their hats: anon, with screams
Of mad delight they drop their spoils, and bound
Among the holly clumps and broken ground,
Racing full speed, and startling in their rush
The fell-fares and the speckled missel-thrush
Out of their glossy coverts: but when now
Their cheeks were flushed, and over each hot brow
Under the feather'd hats of the sweet pair
In blinding masses shower'd the golden hair—
Then Iseult called them to her, and the three
Cluster'd under the holly screen, and she
Told them an old-world Breton history.

Warm in their mantles wrapt, the three stood there,
Under the hollies, in the clear still air—
Mantles with those rich furs deep glistering
Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt bring.
Long they stayed still—then, pacing at their ease,
Mov'd up and down under the glossy trees;
But still as they pursued their warm dry road
From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flow'd,
And still the children listen'd, their blue eyes
Fix'd on their mother's face in wide surprise;
Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side,
Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright and wide,
Nor to the snow which, though 'twas all away
From the open heath, still by the hedge-rows lay,
Nor to the shining sea-fowl that with screams
Bore up from where the bright Atlantic gleams,
Swooping to landward; nor to where, quite clear,
The fell-fares settled on the thickets near.
And they would still have listen'd, till dark night
Came keen and chill down on the heather bright;
But, when the red glow on the sea grew cold,
And the grey turrets of the castle old
Look'd sternly through the frosty evening air,—
Then Iseult took by the hand those children fair,
And brought her tale to an end, and found the path
And led them home over the darkening heath.

And is she happy? Does she see unmov'd

The days in which she might have liv'd and lov'd
Slip without bringing bliss slowly away,
One after one, to-morrow like to-day?
Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will:—
Is it this thought that makes her mien so still,
Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet,
So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet
Her children's? She moves slow: her voice alone
Has yet an infantine and silver tone,
But even that comes languidly: in truth,
She seems one dying in a mask of youth.
And now she will go home, and softly lay
Her laughing children in their beds, and play
Awhile with them before they sleep; and then
She'll light her silver lamp, which fishermen
Dragging their nets through the rough waves, afar,
Along this iron coast, know like a star,
And take her broidery frame, and there she'll sit
Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it,
Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind
Her children, or to listen to the wind.
And when the clock peals midnight, she will move
Her work away, and let her fingers rove
Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's hound
Who lies, guarding her feet, along the ground:
Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes
Fix'd, her slight hands clasp'd on her lap; then rise,
And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have told
Her rosary beads of ebony tipp'd with gold,
Then to her soft sleep; and to-morrow'll be
To-day's exact repeated effigy.

Yes, it is lonely for her in her hall.
The children, and the grey-hair'd seneschal,
Her women, and Sir Tristram's aged hound,
Are there the sole companions to be found.
But these she loves; and noisier life than this
She would find ill to bear, weak as she is:
She has her children too, and night and day
Is with them; and the wide heaths where they play,
The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-shore,
The sand, the sea birds, and the distant sails,
These are to her dear as to them: the tales
With which this day the children she beguil'd
She glean'd from Breton grandames when a child
In every hut along this sea-coast wild.
She herself loves them still, and, when they are told,
Can forget all to hear them, as of old.

Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,
Not suffering, that shuts up eye and ear
To all which has delighted them before,
And lets us be what we were once no more.
No: we may suffer deeply, yet retain
Power to be mov'd and sooth'd, for all our pain,
By what of old pleas'd us, and will again.
No: 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,
In whose hot air our spirits are upcurl'd
Until they crumble, or else grow like steel—
Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring—
Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,
But takes away the power—this can avail,
By drying up our joy in everything
To make our former pleasures all seem stale.
This, or some tyrannous single thought, some fit
Of passion, which subdues our souls to it,
Till for its sake alone we live and move—
Call it ambition, or remorse, or love—
This too can change us wholly, and make seem
All that we did before, shadow and dream.

And yet, I swear, it angers me to see
How this fool passion gulls men potently;
Being in truth but a diseas'd unrest
And an unnatural overheat at best.
How they are full of languor and distress
Not having it; which when they do possess
They straightway are burnt up with fume and care,
And spend their lives in posting here and there
Where this plague drives them; and have little ease,

Are fretful with themselves, and hard to please,
Like that bold Caesar, the fam'd Roman wight,
Who wept at reading of a Grecian knight
Who made a name at younger years than he:
Or that renown'd mirror of chivalry,
Prince Alexander, Philip's peerless son,
Who carried the great war from Macedon
Into the Soudan's realm, and thunder'd on
To die at thirty-five in Babylon.

What tale did Iseult to the children say,
Under the hollies, that bright winter's day?

She told them of the fairy-haunted land
Away the other side of Brittany,
Beyond the heaths, edg'd by the lonely sea;
Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,
Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine creeps,
Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree sleeps.
For here he came with the fay Vivian,
One April, when the warm days first began;
He was on foot, and that false fay, his friend,
On her white palfrey: here he met his end,
In these lone sylvan glades, that April day.
This tale of Merlin and the lovely fay
Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought clear
Before the children's fancy him and her.

Blowing between the stems the forest air
Had loosen'd the brown curls of Vivian's hair,
Which play'd on her flush'd cheek, and her blue eyes
Sparkled with mocking glee and exercise.
Her palfrey's flanks were mired and bath'd in sweat,
For they had travell'd far and not stopp'd yet.
A brier in that tangled wilderness
Had scor'd her white right hand, which she allows
To rest unglov'd on her green riding-dress;
The other warded off the drooping boughs.
But still she chatted on, with her blue eyes
Fix'd full on Merlin's face, her stately prize:
Her 'havior had the morning's fresh clear grace,
The spirit of the woods was in her face;
She look'd so witching fair, that learnèd wight
Forgot his craft, and his best wits took flight,
And he grew fond, and eager to obey
His mistress, use her empire as she may.

They came to where the brushwood ceas'd, and day
Peer'd 'twixt the stems; and the ground broke away
In a slop'd sward down to a brawling brook,
And up as high as where they stood to look
On the brook's further side was clear; but then
The underwood and trees began again.
This open glen was studded thick with thorns,
Then white with blossom; and you saw the horns,
Through the green fern, of the shy fallow-deer
Which come at noon down to the water here.
You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along
Under the thorns on the green sward; and strong
The blackbird whistled from the dingles near,
And the light chipping of the woodpecker
Rang lonelily and sharp: the sky was fair,
And a fresh breath of spring stirr'd everywhere.
Merlin and Vivian stopp'd on the slope's brow
To gaze on the green sea of leaf and bough
Which glistering lay all round them, lone and mild,
As if to itself the quiet forest smil'd.
Upon the brow-top grew a thorn; and here
The grass was dry and moss'd, and you saw clear
Across the hollow: white anemones
Starr'd the cool turf, and clumps of primroses
Ran out from the dark underwood behind.
No fairer resting-place a man could find.

"Here let us halt," said Merlin then; and she
Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

They sate them down together, and a sleep
Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.
Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,
And from her brown-lock'd head the wimple throws,
And takes it in her hand, and waves it over
The blossom'd thorn-tree and her sleeping lover.
Nine times she wav'd the fluttering wimple round,
And made a little plot of magic ground.
And in that daisied circle, as men say,
Is Merlin prisoner till the judgment-day,
But she herself whither she will can rove,
For she was passing weary of his love.

MEMORIAL VERSES

APRIL, 1850

Goethe in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
But one such death remain'd to come;
The last poetic voice is dumb—
We stand to-day by Wordworth's tomb.

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little; but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with eternal law;
And yet with reverential awe
We watch'd the fount of fiery life
Which served for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said:
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
Physician of the iron age,
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear;
And struck his finger on the place,
And said: *Thou ailest here, and here!*
He look'd on Europe's dying hour
Of fitful dream and feverish power;
His eye plunged down the weltering strife,
The turmoil of expiring life—
He said: *The end is everywhere,*
Art still has truth, take refuge there!
And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, and insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!
For never has such soothing voice
Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
Wordsworth has gone from us—and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we!
He too upon a wintry clime
Had fallen—on this iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loosed our hearts in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth returned; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.

Ah! since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel;
Others will strengthen us to bear—
But who, ah! who, will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly—
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave
O Rotha, with thy living wave!
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

SELF-DECEPTION

(1852)

Say, what blinds us, that we claim the glory

Of possessing powers not our share?
—Since man woke on earth, he knows his story,
But, before we woke on earth, we were.

Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit
Roam'd, ere birth, the treasuries of God;
Saw the gifts, the powers it might inherit,
Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.

Then, as now, this tremulous, eager being
Strain'd and long'd and grasp'd each gift it saw;
Then, as now, a Power beyond our seeing,
Staved us back, and gave our choice the law.

Ah, whose hand that day through Heaven guided
Man's new spirit, since it was not we?
Ah, who swayed our choice and who decided
What our gifts, and what our wants should be?

For, alas! he left us each retaining
Shreds of gifts which he refused in full.
Still these waste us with their hopeless straining,
Still the attempt to use them proves them null.

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.
Ah! and he, who placed our master-feeling,
Fail'd to place that master-feeling clear.

We but dream we have our wish'd-for powers,
Ends we seek we never shall attain.
Ah! *some* power exists there, which is ours?
Some end is there, we indeed may gain?

A FAREWELL

(1852)

My horse's feet beside the lake,
Where sweet the unbroken moonbeams lay,
Sent echoes through the night to wake
Each glistening strand, each heath-fring'd bay.

The poplar avenue was pass'd,
And the roof'd bridge that spans the stream.
Up the steep street I hurried fast,
Lit by thy taper's starlike beam.

I came; I saw thee rise:—the blood
Came flushing to thy languid cheek.
Lock'd in each other's arms we stood,
In tears, with hearts too full to speak.

Days flew: ah, soon I could discern
A trouble in thine alter'd air.
Thy hand lay languidly in mine—
Thy cheek was grave, thy speech grew rare.

I blame thee not:—this heart, I know,
To be long lov'd was never fram'd;
For something in its depths doth glow
Too strange, too restless, too untam'd.

And women—things that live and move
Min'd by the fever of the soul—
They seek to find in those they love
Stern strength, and promise of control.

They ask not kindness, gentle ways;
These they themselves have tried and known:
They ask a soul that never sways
With the blind gusts which shake their own.

I too have felt the load I bore
In a too strong emotion's sway;
I too have wish'd, no woman more,
This starting, feverish heart away.

I too have long'd for trenchant force,
And will like a dividing spear;
Have praised the keen, unscrupulous course,
Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear.

But in the world I learnt, what there
Thou too wilt surely one day prove,
That will, that energy, though rare,
Are yet far, far less rare than love.

Go, then! till Time and Fate impress
This truth on thee, be mine no more!
They will: for thou, I feel, no less
Than I, wert destin'd to this lore.

We school our manners, act our parts:
But He, who sees us through and through,

Knows that the bent of both our hearts
Was to be gentle, tranquil, true.

And though we wear out life, alas!
Distracted as a homeless wind,
In beating where we must not pass,
In seeking what we shall not find;

Yet we shall one day gain, life past,
Clear prospect o'er our being's whole:
Shall see ourselves, and learn at last
Our true affinities of soul.

We shall not then deny a course
To every thought the mass ignore;
We shall not then call hardness force,
Nor lightness wisdom any more.

Then, in the eternal Father's smile,
Our sooth'd, encourag'd souls will dare
To seem as free from pride and guile,
As good, as generous, as they are.

Then we shall know our friends: though much
Will have been lost—the help in strife;
The thousand sweet still joys of such
As hand in hand face earthly life—

Though these be lost, there will be yet
A sympathy august and pure;
Ennobled by a vast regret,
And by contrition seal'd thrice sure.

And we, whose ways were unlike here,
May then more neighboring courses ply,
May to each other be brought near,
And greet across infinity.

How sweet, unreach'd by earthly jars,
My sister! to behold with thee
The hush among the shining stars,
The calm upon the moonlit sea.

How sweet to feel, on the boon air,
All our unquiet pulses cease;
To feel that nothing can impair
The gentleness, the thirst for peace—

The gentleness too rudely hurl'd
On this wild earth of hate and fear:
The thirst for peace a raving world
Would never let us satiate here.

ISOLATION

(1852)

Yes: in the sea of life enisl'd,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing,
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour;

Oh then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
—For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent.
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?
A God, a God their severance rul'd;
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

PROGRESS

(1852)

The Master stood upon the mount, and taught.
He saw a fire in his disciples' eyes;
"The old law," they said, "is wholly come to naught!
Behold the new world rise!"

"Was it," the Lord then said, "with scorn ye saw
The old law observed by Scribes and Pharisees?
I say unto you, see *ye* keep that law
More faithfully than these!

"Too hasty heads for ordering worlds, alas!
Think not that I to annul the law have will'd;
No jot, no tittle from the law shall pass,
Till all hath been fulfill'd."

So Christ said eighteen hundred years ago.
And what then shall be said to those to-day
Who cry aloud to lay the old world low
To clear the new world's way?

"Religious fervors! ardor misapplied!
Hence, hence," they cry, "ye do but keep man blind!

But keep him self-immersed, preoccupied,
And lame the active mind."

Ah! from the old world let some one answer give:
"Scorn ye this world, their tears, their inward cares?
I say unto you, see that *your* souls live
A deeper life than theirs.

"Say ye: The spirit of man has found new roads;
And we must leave the old faiths, and walk therein?—
Leave then the Cross as ye have left carved gods,
But guard the fire within!

"Bright, else, and fast the stream of life may roll,
And no man may the other's hurt behold;
Yet each will have one anguish—his own soul
Which perishes of cold."

Here let that voice make end! then let a strain
From a far lonelier distance, like the wind
Be heard, floating through heaven, and fill again
These men's profoundest mind:

"Children of men! the unseen Power, whose eye
For ever doth accompany mankind,
Hath look'd on no religion scornfully
That man did ever find.

"Which has not taught weak wills how much they can,
Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain,
Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man:
Thou must be born again!

"Children of men! not that your age excel
In pride of life the ages of your sires,
But that *you* think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,
The Friend of man desires."

From "EMPEDOCLES ON ETNA"

(1852)

ACT I, SCENE II

Noon. A Glen on the highest skirts of the woody region of Etna.

EMPEDOCLES. PAUSANIAS

PAUSANIAS

The noon is hot. When we have cross'd the stream
We shall have left the woody tract, and come
Upon the open shoulder of the hill.
See how the giant spires of yellow bloom
Of the sun-loving gentian, in the heat,
Are shining on those naked slopes like flame!
Let us rest here; and now, Empedocles,
Pantheia's history. [*A harp-note below is heard.*

EMPEDOCLES

Hark! what sound was that
Rose from below? If it were possible,
And we were not so far from human haunt,
I should have said that some one touch'd a harp.
Hark! there again!

PAUSANIAS

'Tis the boy Callicles,
The sweetest harp-player in Catana.
He is for ever coming on these hills,
In summer, to all country festivals,
With a gay revelling band; he breaks from them
Sometimes, and wanders far among the glens.
But heed him not, he will not mount to us;
I spoke with him this morning. Once more, therefore,
Instruct me of Pantheia's story, Master,
As I have pray'd thee.

EMPEDOCLES

That? and to what end?

PAUSANIAS

It is enough that all men speak of it.
But I will also say, that when the Gods
Visit us as they do with sign and plague,
To know those spells of time that stay their hand
Were to live free from terror.

EMPEDOCLES

Spells? Mistrust them.
Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven.
Man has a mind with which to plan his safety;
Know that, and help thyself.

PAUSANIAS

But thy own words?
"The wit and counsel of man was never clear,
Troubles confound the little wit he has."
Mind is a light which the Gods mock us with,
To lead those false who trust it.

[*The harp sounds again.*

EMPEDOCLES

Hist! once more!
Listen, Pausanias!—Aye, 'tis Callicles!
I know those notes among a thousand.
Hark;

CALLICLES

(*Sings unseen, from below*)

The track winds down to the clear stream
To cross the sparkling shallows; there
The cattle love to gather, on their way
To the high mountain pastures, and to stay,
Till the rough cow-herds drive them past,
Knee-deep in the cool ford; for 'tis the last
Of all the woody, high, well-water'd dells
On Etna; and the beam
Of noon is broken there by chestnut boughs
Down its steep verdant sides; the air
Is freshen'd by the leaping stream, which throws
Eternal showers of spray on the moss'd roots
Of trees, and veins of turf, and long dark shoots
Of ivy-plants, and fragrant hanging bells
Of hyacinths, and on late anemones,
That muffle its wet banks; but glade,
And stream, and sward, and chestnut trees,
End here; Etna beyond, in the broad glare
Of the hot noon, without a shade,
Slope behind slope, up to the peak, lies bare;
The peak, round which the white clouds play.

In such a glen, on such a day,
On Pelion, on the grassy ground,
Chiron, the aged Centaur, lay,
The young Achilles standing by.
The Centaur taught him to explore
The mountains; where the glens are dry,
And the tir'd Centaurs come to rest,
And where the soaking springs abound,
And the straight ashes grow for spears,
And where the hill-goats come to feed,
And the sea-eagles build their nest.
He show'd him Phthia far away,
And said: O boy, I taught this lore
To Peleus, in long distant years!
He told him of the Gods, the stars,
The tides;—and then of mortal wars,
And of the life which heroes lead
Before they reach the Elysian place
And rest in the immortal mead;
And all the wisdom of his race.

[*The music below ceases, and* EMPEDOCLES *speaks, accompanying himself in a solemn manner on his harp.*

The out-spread world to span
A cord the Gods first slung,
And then the soul of man
There, like a mirror, hung,
And bade the winds through space impel the gusty toy.

Hither and thither spins
The wind-borne, mirroring soul,
A thousand glimpses wins,
And never sees a whole;
Looks once, and drives elsewhere, and leaves its last employ.

The Gods laugh in their sleeve
To watch man doubt and fear
Who knows not what to believe
Since he sees nothing clear,
And dares stamp nothing false where he finds nothing sure.

Is this, Pausanias, so?
And can our souls not strive,
But with the winds must go,
And hurry where they drive?
Is fate indeed so strong, man's strength indeed so poor?

I will not judge. That man,
Howbeit, I judge as lost,

Whose mind allows a plan,
Which would degrade it most;
And he treats doubt the best who tries
to see least ill.

Be not, then, fear's blind slave!
Thou art my friend; to thee,
All knowledge that I have,
All skill I wield, are free.
Ask not the latest news of the last miracle,

Ask not what days and nights
In trance Pantheia lay,
But ask how thou such sights
May'st see without dismay;
Ask what most helps when known, thou son of Anchitus!

What? hate, and awe, and shame
Fill thee to see our time;
Thou feelest thy soul's frame
Shaken and out of chime?
What? life and chance go hard with thee too, as with us;

Thy citizens, 'tis said,
Envy thee and oppress,
Thy goodness no men aid,
All strive to make it less;
Tyranny, pride, and lust, fill Sicily's abodes;

Heaven is with earth at strife,
Signs make thy soul afraid,
The dead return to life,
Rivers are dried, winds stay'd;
Scarce can one think in calm, so threatening are the Gods;

And we feel, day and night,
The burden of ourselves—
Well, then, the wiser wight
In his own bosom delves,
And asks what ails him so, and gets what cure he can.

The sophist sneers: Fool, take
Thy pleasure, right or wrong.
The pious wail: Forsake
A world these sophists throng.
Be neither saint or sophist-led, but be a man!

These hundred doctors try
To preach thee to their school.
We have the truth! they cry;
And yet their oracle,
Trumpet it as they will, is but the same as thine.

Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done with fears;
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years.
Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine!

What makes thee struggle and rave?
Why are men ill at ease?—
'Tis that the lot they have
Fails their own will to please;
For man would make no murmuring, were his will obey'd.

And why is it, that still
Man with his lot thus fights?—
'Tis that he makes this *will*
The measure of his *rights*,
And believes Nature outraged if his will's gainsaid.

Couldst thou, Pausanias, learn
How deep a fault is this;
Couldst thou but once discern
Thou hast no *right* to bliss,
No title from the Gods to welfare and repose;

Then thou wouldst look less mazed
Whene'er of bliss debarr'd,
Nor think the Gods were crazed
When thy own lot went hard.
But we are all the same—the fools of our own woes!

For, from the first faint morn
Of life, the thirst for bliss
Deep in man's heart is born;
And, sceptic as he is,
He fails not to judge clear if this be quench'd or no.

Nor is the thirst to blame.
Man errs not that he deems
His welfare his true aim,
He errs because he dreams
The world does but exist that welfare to bestow.

We mortals are no kings
For each of whom to sway
A new-made world up-springs,
Meant merely for his play;
No, we are strangers here; the world is from of old.

In vain our pent wills fret,
And would the world subdue.
Limits we did not set
Condition all we do;
Born into life we are, and life must be our mould.

Born into life!—man grows
Forth from his parents' stem,
And blends their bloods, as those
Of theirs are blent in them;
So each new man strikes root into a far fore-time.

Born into life!—we bring
A bias with us here,
And, when here, each new thing
Affects us we come near;
To tunes we did not call our being must keep chime.

Born into life!—in vain,
Opinions, those or these,
Unalter'd to retain
The obstinate mind decrees;
Experience, like a sea, soaks all-effacing in.

Born into life!—who lists
May what is false hold dear,
And for himself make mists
Through which to see less clear;
The world is what it is, for all our dust and din.

Born into life!—'tis we,
And not the world, are new;
Our cry for bliss, our plea,
Others have urged it too—
Our wants have all been felt, our errors made before.

No eye could be too sound
To observe a world so vast,
No patience too profound
To sort what's here amass'd;
How man may here best live no care too great to explore.

But we—as some rude guest
Would change, where'er he roam,
The manners there profess'd
To those he brings from home—
We mark not the world's course, but would have *it* take *ours*.

The world's course proves the terms
On which man wins content;
Reason the proof confirms—
We spurn it, and invent
A false course for the world, and for ourselves, false powers.

Riches we wish to get,
Yet remain spendthrifts still;
We would have health, and yet
Still use our bodies ill;
Bafflers of our own prayers, from youth to life's last scenes.

We would have inward peace,
Yet will not look within;
We would have misery cease,
Yet will not cease from sin;
We want all pleasant ends, but will use no harsh means;

We do not what we ought,
What we ought not, we do,
And lean upon the thought
That chance will bring us through;
But our own acts, for good or ill, are mightier powers.

Yet, even when man forsakes
All sin,—is just, is pure,
Abandons all which makes
His welfare insecure,—
Other existences there are, that clash with ours.

Like us, the lightning-fires
Love to have scope and play;
The stream, like us, desires
An unimpeded way;
Like us, the Libyan wind delights to roam at large.

Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To give his virtues room;
Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good man's barge.

Nature, with equal mind,
Sees all her sons at play;
Sees man control the wind,
The wind sweep man away;
Allows the proudly-riding and the foundering bark.

And lastly, though of ours
No weakness spoil our lot,
Though the non-human powers
Of Nature harm us not,
The ill deeds of other men make often *our* life dark.

What were the wise man's plan?—
Through this sharp, toil-set life,
To work as best he can,
And win what's won by strife.—
But we an easier way to cheat our pains have found.

Scratch'd by a fall, with moans
As children of weak age
Lend life to the dumb stones
Whereon to vent their rage,
And bend their little fists, and rate the senseless ground;

So, loath to suffer mute,
We, peopling the void air,
Make Gods to whom to impute
The ills we ought to bear;
With God and Fate to rail at, suffering easily.

Yet grant—as sense long miss'd
Things that are now perceived,
And much may still exist
Which is not yet believed—
Grant that the world were full of Gods we cannot see;

All things the world which fill
Of but one stuff are spun,
That we who rail are still,
With what we rail at, one;
One with the o'erlabored Power that through the breadth and length

Of earth, and air, and sea,
In men, and plants, and stones,
Hath toil perpetually,
And travails, pants, and moans;
Fain would do all things well, but sometimes fails in strength.

And patiently exact
This universal God
Alike to any act
Proceeds at any nod,
And quietly declaims the cursings of himself.

This is not what man hates,
Yet he can curse but this.
Harsh Gods and hostile Fates
Are dreams! this only *is*
Is everywhere; sustains the wise, the foolish elf.

Not only, in the intent
To attach blame elsewhere,
Do we at will invent
Stern Powers who make their care
To embitter human life, malignant Deities;

But next, we would reverse
The schemes ourselves have spun,
And what we made to curse
We now would lean upon,
And feign kind Gods who perfect what man vainly tries.

Look, the world tempts our eye,
And we would know it all!
We map the starry sky,
We mine this earthen ball,
We measure the sea-tides, we number the sea-sands;

We scrutinise the dates
Of long-past human things,
The bounds of effaced states,
The lines of deceased kings;
We search out dead men's words, and works of dead men's hands:

We shut our eyes, and muse
How our own minds are made,
What springs of thought they use,
How righten'd, how betray'd—
And spend our wit to name what most employ unnamed.

But still, as we proceed
The mass swells more and more
Of volumes yet to read,
Of secrets yet to explore.
Our hair grows gray, our eyes are dimm'd, our heat is tamed;

We rest our faculties,
And thus address the Gods:
"True science if there is,
It stays in your abodes!
Man's measures cannot mete the immeasurable All.

"You only can take in
The world's immense design.
Our desperate search was sin,
Which henceforth we resign,
Sure only that your mind sees all things which befall."

Fools! That in man's brief term
He cannot all things view,
Affords no ground to affirm
That there are Gods who do;
Nor does being weary prove that he has where to rest.

Again.—Our youthful blood
Claims rapture as its right;
The world, a rolling flood
Of newness and delight,
Draws in the enamor'd gazer to its shining breast;

Pleasure, to our hot grasp,
Gives flowers after flowers;
With passionate warmth we clasp
Hand after hand in ours;
Now do we soon perceive how fast our youth is spent.

At once our eyes grow clear!
We see, in blank dismay,
Year posting after year,
Sense after sense decay;
Our shivering heart is mined by secret discontent;

Yet still, in spite of truth,
In spite of hopes entomb'd
That longing of our youth
Burns ever unconsumed,
Still hungrier for delight as delights grow more rare.

We pause; we hush our heart,
And thus address the Gods:
"The world hath fail'd to impart
The joy our youth forebodes,
Fail'd to fill up the void which in our breasts we bear.

"Changeful till now, we still
Look'd on to something new;
Let us, with changeless will,
Henceforth look on to you,
To find in you the joy we in vain here require!"

Fools! That so often here
Happiness mock'd our prayer,
I think, might make us fear
A like event elsewhere;
Make us, not fly to dreams, but moderate desire.

And yet, for those who know
Themselves, who wisely take
Their way through life, and bow
To what they cannot break,
Why should I say that life need yield but *moderate* bliss?

Shall we, with temper spoil'd,
Health sapp'd by living ill,
And judgment all embroil'd
By sadness and self-will,
Shall *we* judge what for man is not true bliss or is?

Is it so small a thing
To have enjoy'd the sun,
To have lived light in the spring,
To have loved, to have thought, to have done;
To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling foes—

That we must feign a bliss
Of doubtful future date,
And, while we dream on this,
Lose all our present state,
And relegate to worlds yet distant our repose?

Not much, I know, you prize
What pleasures may be had,
Who look on life with eyes
Estranged, like mine, and sad;
And yet the village-churl feels the truth more than you.

Who's loath to leave this life
Which to him little yields;
His hard-task'd sunburnt wife,
His often-labor'd fields,
The boors with whom he talk'd, the country spots he knew.

But thou, because thou hear'st
Men scoff at Heaven and Fate,
Because the Gods thou fear'st
Fail to make blest thy state,
Tremblest, and wilt not dare to trust the joys there are.

I say, Fear not! life still
Leaves human effort scope.
But, since life teems with ill,
Nurse no extravagant hope;
Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then despair!

[*A long pause. At the end of it the notes of a harp below are again heard, and* CALLICLES *sings*:—

Far, far from here,
The Adriatic breaks in a warm bay
Among the green Illyrian hills; and there
The sunshine in the happy glens is fair,
And by the sea, and in the brakes.
The grass is cool, the sea-side air
Buoyant and fresh, the mountain flowers
As virginal and sweet as ours.

And there, they say, two bright and aged snakes,
Who once were Cadmus and Harmonia,
Bask in the glens or on the warm sea-shore,
In breathless quiet, after all their ills.
Nor do they see their country, nor the place
Where the Sphinx liv'd among the frowning hills,
Nor the unhappy palace of their race,
Nor Thebes, nor the Ismenus, any more.

There those two live, far in the Illyrian brakes.
They had stay'd long enough to see
In Thebes, the billow of calamity
Over their own dear children roll'd,
Curse upon curse, pang upon pang,
For years, they sitting helpless in their home,
A grey old man and woman; yet of old
The Gods had to their marriage come,
And at the banquet all the Muses sang.

Therefore they did not end their days
In sight of blood; but were rapt, far away,
To where the west wind plays,
And murmurs of the Adriatic come
To those untrodden mountain lawns; and there
Placed safely in chang'd forms, the Pair
Wholly forget their first sad life, and home,
And all that Theban woe, and stray
For ever through the glens, placid and dumb.

EMPEDOCLES

That was my harp-player again—where is he?
Down by the stream?

PAUSANIAS

Yes, Master, in the wood.

EMPEDOCLES

He ever lov'd the Theban story well!
But the day wears. Go now, Pausanias,
For I must be alone. Leave me one mule;
Take down with thee the rest to Catana.
And for young Callicles, thank him from me;
Tell him I never fail'd to love his lyre:
But he must follow me no more to-night.

CALLICLES' LAST SONG

Through the black, rushing smoke-bursts,
Thick breaks the red flame;
All Etna heaves fiercely
Her forest-clothed frame.

Not here, O Apollo!
Are haunts meet for thee.
But, where Helicon breaks down
In cliffs to the sea,

Where the moon-silver'd inlets
Send far their light voice
Up the still vale of Thisbe,
O speed, and rejoice!

On the sward at the cliff-top
Lie strewn the white flocks,
On the cliff-side the pigeons
Roost deep in the rocks.

In the moonlight the shepherds,
Soft lull'd by the rills,
Lie wrapped in their blankets
Asleep on the hills.

—What forms are these coming
So white through the gloom?
What garments out-glistening
The gold-flower'd broom?

What sweet-breathing presence
Out-perfumes the thyme?
What voices enrapture
The night's balmy prime?—

'Tis Apollo comes leading
His choir, the Nine.
—The leader is fairest,
But all are divine.

They are lost in the hollows!
They stream up again!
What seeks on this mountain
The glorified train?—

They bathe on this mountain,
In the spring by their road;
Then on to Olympus,
Their endless abode.

—Whose praise do they mention?
Of what is it told?—
What will be for ever;
What was from of old.

First hymn they the Father
Of all things; and then,

The rest of immortals,
The action of men;

The day in his hotness,
The strife with the palm;
The night in her silence,
The stars in their calm.

THE YOUTH OF NATURE

(1852)

Raised are the dripping oars,
Silent the boat! the lake,
Lovely and soft as a dream,
Swims in the sheen of the moon.
The mountains stand at its head
Clear in the pure June-night,
But the valleys are flooded with haze.
Rydal and Fairfield are there;
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.
So it is, so it will be for aye.
Nature is fresh as of old,
Is lovely; a mortal is dead.

The spots which recall him survive,
For he lent a new life to these hills.
The Pillar still broods o'er the fields
Which border Ennerdale Lake,
And Egremont sleeps by the sea.
The gleam of The Evening Star
Twinkles on Grasmere no more,
But ruin'd and solemn and gray
The sheepfold of Michael survives;
And, far to the south, the heath
Still blows in the Quantock coombs
By the favorite waters of Ruth.
These survive!—yet not without pain
Pain and dejection to-night,
Can I feel that their poet is gone.
He grew old in an age he condemn'd.
He look'd on the rushing decay
Of the times which had shelter'd his youth,
Felt the dissolving throes
Of a social order he loved;
Outlived his brethren, his peers;
And, like the Theban seer,
Died in his enemies' day.

Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa,
Copais lay bright in the moon,
Helicon glass'd in the lake
Its firs, and afar rose the peaks
Of Parnassus, snowily clear;
Thebes was behind him in flames,
And the clang of arms in his ear,
When his awe-struck captors led
The Theban seer to the spring.
Tiresias drank and died.
Nor did reviving Thebes
See such a prophet again.

Well may we mourn, when the head
Of a sacred poet lies low
In an age which can rear them no more!
The complaining millions of men
Darken in labor and pain;
But he was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,
Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad.
He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day
Of his race is past on the earth;
And darkness returns to our eyes.

For, oh! is it you, is it you,
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,
And mountains, that fill us with joy,
Or the poet who sings you so well?
Is it you, O beauty, O grace,
O charm, O romance, that we feel,
Or the voice which reveals what you are?
Are ye, like dâylight and sun,
Shared and rejoiced in by all?
Or are ye immersed in the mass
Of matter, and hard to extract,
Or sunk at the core of the world
Too deep for the most to discern?
Like stars in the deep of the sky,
Which arise on the glass of the sage,
But are lost when their watcher is gone.

"They are here"—I heard, as men heard
In Mysian Ida the voice
Of the Mighty Mother, or Crete,
The murmur of Nature reply—
"Loveliness, magic, and grace,
They are here! they are set in the world.
They abide; and the finest of souls
Hath not been thrill'd by them all,
Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.
The poet who sings them may die,
But they are immortal and live,
For they are the life of the world.
Will ye not learn it, and know,
When ye mourn that a poet is dead,
That the singer was less than his themes,
Life, and emotion, and I?

"More than the singer are these.
Weak is the tremor of pain
That thrills in his mournfullest chord
To that which once ran through his soul.
Cold the elation of joy
In his gladdest, airiest song,

To that which of old in his youth
Fill'd him and made him divine.
Hardly his voice at its best
Gives us a sense of the awe,
The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom
Of the unlit gulf of himself.

"Ye know not yourselves; and your bards—
The clearest, the best, who have read
Most in themselves—have beheld
Less than they left unreveal'd.
Ye express not yourselves;—can you make
With marble, with color, with word,
What charm'd you in others re-live?
Can thy pencil, O artist! restore
The figure, the bloom of thy love,
As she was in her morning of spring?
Canst thou paint the ineffable smile
Of her eyes as they rested on thine?
Can the image of life have the glow,
The motion of life itself?

"Yourselves and your fellows ye know not; and me,
The mateless, the one, will ye know?
Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell
Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,
My longing, my sadness, my joy?
Will ye claim for your great ones the gift
To have render'd the gleam of my skies,
To have echoed the moan of my seas,
Utter'd the voice of my hills?
When your great ones depart, will ye say:
All things have suffer'd a loss,
Nature is hid in their grave?

"Race after race, man after man,
Have thought that my secret was theirs,
Have dream'd that I lived but for them,
That they were my glory and joy.
—They are dust, they are changed, they are gone!
I remain."

SELF-DEPENDENCE

(1852)

Weary of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
"Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!

"Ah, once more," I cried, "ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew;
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!"

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer:
"Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.

"Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

"And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

"Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see."

O air-born voice; long since, severely clear,
A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear:
"Resolve to be thyself; and know that he,
Who finds himself, loses his misery!"

MORALITY

(1852)

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides;
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;

We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 't were done.
Not till the hours of light return,
All we have built do we discern.

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,
When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,
Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,
Thy struggling, task'd morality—
Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air,
Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.

And she, whose censure thou dost dread,
Whose eye thou wast afraid to seek,
See, on her face a glow is spread,
A strong emotion on her cheek!
"Ah, child!" she cries, "that strife divine,
Whence was it, for it is not mine?

"There is no effort on *my* brow—
I do not strive, I do not weep;
I rush with the swift spheres and glow
In joy, and when I will, I sleep.
Yet that severe, that earnest air,
I saw, I felt it once—but where?

"I knew not yet the gauge of time,
Nor wore the manacles of space;
I felt it in some other clime,
I saw it in some other place.
'Twas when the heavenly house I trod,
And lay upon the breast of God."

A SUMMER NIGHT

(1852)

In the deserted, moon-blanch'd street,
How lonely rings the echo of my feet!
Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,
Silent and white, unopening down,
Repellent as the world;—but see,
A break between the housetops shows
The moon! and, lost behind her, fading dim
Into the dewy dark obscurity
Down at the far horizon's rim,
Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose!
And to my mind the thought
Is on a sudden brought
Of a past night, and a far different scene.
Headlands stood out into the moonlit deep
As clearly as at noon;
The spring-tide's brimming flow
Heaved dazzlingly between;

Houses, with long white sweep,
Girdled the glistening bay;
Behind, through the soft air,
The blue haze-cradled mountains spread away,
The night was far more fair—
But the same restless pacings to and fro,
And the same vainly throbbing heart was there,
And the same bright, calm moon.

And the calm moonlight seems to say:
Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast,
Which neither deadens into rest,
Nor ever feels the fiery glow
That whirls the spirit from itself away,
But fluctuates to and fro,
Never by passion quite possess'd
And never quite benumb'd by the world's sway?—
And I, I know not if to pray
Still to be what I am, or yield and be
Like all the other men I see.

For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where, in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall.
And as, year after year,
Fresh products of their barren labor fall
From their tired hands, and rest
Never yet comes more near,
Gloom settles slowly down over their breast;
And while they try to stem
The waves of mournful thought by which they are pressed,
Death in their prison reaches them,
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

And the rest, a few,
Escape their prison and depart
On the wide ocean of life anew.
There the freed prisoner, where'er his heart
Listeth, will sail;
Nor doth he know how there prevail,
Despotic on that sea,
Trade-winds which cross it from eternity.
Awhile he holds some false way, undebarr'd
By thwarting signs, and braves
The freshening wind and blackening waves
And then the tempest strikes him; and between
The lightning-bursts is seen

Only a driving wreck,
And the pale master on his spar-strewn deck
With anguish'd face and flying hair
Grasping the rudder hard,
Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
Still standing for some false, impossible shore.
And sterner comes the roar
Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,
And he too disappears, and comes no more.

Is there no life, but these alone?
Madman or slave, must man be one?

Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain!
Clearness divine!
Ye heavens, whose pure dark regions have no sign
Of languor, though so calm, and, though so great,
Are yet untroubled and unpassionate;
Who, though so noble, share in the world's toil,
And, though so task'd, keep free from dust and soil!
I will not say that your mild deeps retain
A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain
Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd in vain—
But I will rather say that you remain
A world above man's head, to let him see
How boundless might his soul's horizons be,
How vast, yet of what clear transparency!
How it were good to abide there, and breathe free;
How fair a lot to fill
Is left to each man still!

THE BURIED LIFE

(1852)

Light flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet!
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll,
Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
We know, we know that we can smile!
But there's a something in this breast,
To which thy light words bring no rest,
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.
Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,
And let me read there, love! thy inmost soul.

Alas! is even love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel?
I knew the mass of men conceal'd
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reproved;
I knew they lived and moved
Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet
The same heart beats in every human breast!

But we, my love!—doth a like spell benumb
Our hearts, our voices?—must we too be dumb?

Ah! well for us, if even we,
Even for a moment, can get free
Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd;
For that which seals them hath been deep-ordain'd!

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be—
By what distractions he would be possess'd,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity—
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;

A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas! none ever mines.
And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown, on each, spirit and power;
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—
Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,
But they course on for ever unexpress'd.
And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do
Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true!
And then we will no more be rack'd
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
Their stupefying power;
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call!
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day.

Only—but this is rare—
When a belovèd hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafen'd ear
Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd—
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its winding murmur; and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes.

THE FUTURE

(1852)

A wanderer is man from his birth.
He was born in a ship
On the breast of the river of Time;
Brimming with wonder and joy
He spreads out his arms to the light,
Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.

As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been.
Whether he wakes
Where the snowy mountainous pass,
Echoing the screams of the eagles,
Hems in its gorges the bed
Of the new-born clear-flowing stream;
Whether he first sees light
Where the river in gleaming rings
Sluggishly winds through the plain;
Whether in sound of the swallowing sea—
As is the world on the banks,
So is the mind of the man.

Vainly does each, as he glides,
Fable and dream
Of the lands which the river of Time
Had left ere he woke on its breast,
Or shall reach when his eyes have been closed.
Only the tract where he sails
He wots of; only the thoughts,
Raised by the objects he passes, are his.

Who can see the green earth any more
As she was by the sources of Time?
Who imagines her fields as they lay
In the sunshine, unworn by the plough?
Who thinks as they thought,
The tribes who then roam'd on her breast,
Her vigorous, primitive sons?
What girl
Now reads in her bosom as clear
As Rebekah read, when she sate
At eve by the palm-shaded well?
Who guards in her breast
As deep, as pellucid a spring
Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

What bard,
At the height of his vision, can deem
Of God, of the world, of the soul,

With a plainness as near,
As flashing as Moses felt
When he lay in the night by his flock
On the starlit Arabian waste?
Can rise and obey
The beck of the Spirit like him?

This tract which the river of Time
Now flows through with us, is the plain.
Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.
Border'd by cities and hoarse
With a thousand cries is its stream.
And we on its breast, our minds
Are confused as the cries which we hear,
Changing and shot as the sights which we see.

And we say that repose has fled
For ever the course of the river of Time,
That cities will crowd to its edge
In a blacker, incessanter line;
That the din will be more on its banks,
Denser the trade on its stream,
Flatter the plain where it flows,
Fiercer the sun overhead.
That never will those on its breast
See an ennobling sight,
Drink of the feeling of quiet again.

But what was before us we know not,
And we know not what shall succeed.

Haply, the river of Time—
As it grows, as the towns on its marge
Fling their wavering lights
On a wider, statelier stream—
May acquire, if not the calm
Of its early mountainous shore,
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush
Of the gray expanse where he floats,
Freshening its current and spotted with foam
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast—
As the pale waste widens around him,
As the banks fade dimmer away,
As the stars come out, and the nightwind
Brings up the stream
Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.

STANZAS IN MEMORY OF THE AUTHOR OF "OBERMANN" [1]

(1852)

In front the awful Alpine track
Crawls up its rocky stair;

The autumn storm-winds drive the rack,
Close o'er it, in the air.

Behind are the abandon'd baths [2]
Mute in their meadows lone;
The leaves are on the valley-paths,
The mists are on the Rhone—

The white mists rolling like a sea!
I hear the torrents roar.
—Yes, Obermann, all speaks of thee;
I feel thee near once more!

I turn thy leaves! I feel their breath
Once more upon me roll;
That air of languor, cold, and death,
Which brooded o'er thy soul.

Fly hence, poor wretch, whoe'er thou art,
Condemn'd to cast about,
All shipwreck in thy own weak heart,
For comfort from without!

A fever in these pages burns
Beneath the calm they feign;
A wounded human spirit turns,
Here, on its bed of pain.

Yes, though the virgin mountain-air
Fresh through these pages blows;
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare
The soul of their white snows;

Though here a mountain-murmur swells
Of many a dark-bough'd pine;
Though, as you read, you hear the bells
Of the high-pasturing kine—

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain-bee,
There sobs I know not what ground-tone
Of human agony.

Is it for this, because the sound
Is fraught too deep with pain,
That, Obermann! the world around
So little loves thy strain?

Some secrets may the poet tell,
For the world loves new ways;
To tell too deep ones is not well—
It knows not what he says.

Yet, of the spirits who have reign'd
In this our troubled day,
I know but two, who have attain'd
Save thee, to see their way.

[1] Étienne Pivert de Senancour.

[2] The Baths of Leuk.

By England's lakes, in gray old age,
His quiet home one keeps;
And one, the strong much-toiling sage,
In German Weimar sleeps.

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken
From half of human fate;
And Goethe's course few sons of men
May think to emulate.

For he pursued a lonely road,
His eyes on Nature's plan;
Neither made man too much a God,
Nor God too much a man.

Strong was he, with a spirit free
From mists, and sane, and clear;
Clearer, how much! than ours—yet we
Have a worse course to steer.

For though his manhood bore the blast
Of a tremendous time,
Yet in a tranquil world was pass'd
His tenderer youthful prime.

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours
Of change, alarm, surprise—
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
What leisure to grow wise?

Like children bathing on the shore,
Buried a wave beneath,
The second wave succeeds, before
We have had time to breathe.

Too fast we live, too much are tried,
Too harass'd, to attain
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide
And luminous view to gain.

And then we turn, thou sadder sage,
To thee! we feel thy spell!
—The hopeless tangle of our age,
Thou too hast scann'd it well!

Immovable thou sittest, still
As death, composed to bear!
Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill,
And icy thy despair.

Yes, as the son of Thetis said,
I hear thee saying now:
Greater by far than thou are dead;
Strive not! die also thou!

Ah! two desires toss about
The poet's feverish blood.
One drives him to the world without,
And one to solitude.

The glow, he cries, *the thrill of life,*
Where, where do these abound?—
Not in the world, not in the strife
Of men, shall they be found.

He who hath watch'd, not shared, the strife,
Knows how the day hath gone.
He only lives with the world's life,
Who hath renounced his own.

To thee we come, then! Clouds are roll'd
Where thou, O seer! art set;
Thy realm of thought is drear and cold—
The world is colder yet!

And thou hast pleasures, too, to share
With those who come to thee—
Balms floating on thy mountain-air,
And healing sights to see.

How often, where the slopes are green
On Jaman, hast thou sate
By some high chalet-door, and seen
The summer-day grow late;

And darkness steal o'er the wet grass
With the pale crocus starr'd,
And reach that glimmering sheet of glass
Beneath the piny sward,

Lake Leman's waters, far below!
And watch'd the rosy light
Fade from the distant peaks of snow;
And on the air of night

Heard accents of the eternal tongue
Through the pine branches play—
Listen'd, and felt thyself grow young!
Listen'd and wept—away!

Away the dreams that but deceive
And thou, sad guide, adieu!
I go, fate drives me; but I leave
Half of my life with you.

We, in some unknown Power's employ,
Move on a rigorous line;
Can neither, when we will, enjoy,
Nor when we will, resign.

I in the world must live; but thou,
Thou melancholy shade!
Wilt not, if thou canst see me now,
Condemn me, nor upbraid.

For thou art gone away from earth,
And place with those dost claim,

The Children of the Second Birth,
Whom the world could not tame;

And with that small, transfigured band,
Whom many a different way
Conducted to their common land,
Thou learn'st to think as they.

Christian and pagan, king and slave,
Soldier and anchorite,
Distinctions we esteem so grave,
Are nothing in their sight.

They do not ask, who pined unseen,
Who was on action hurl'd,
Whose one bond is, that all have been
Unspotted by the world.

There without anger thou wilt see
Him who obeys thy spell
No more, so he but rest, like thee,
Unsoil'd!—and so, farewell.

Farewell!—Whether thou now liest near
That much-loved inland sea,
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer
Vevey and Meillerie:

And in that gracious region bland,
Where with clear-rustling wave
The scented pines of Switzerland
Stand dark round thy green grave,

Between the dusty vineyard-walls
Issuing on that green place
The early peasant still recalls
The pensive stranger's face,

And stoops to clear thy moss-grown date
Ere he plods on again;—
Or whether, by maligner fate,
Among the swarms of men,

Where between granite terraces
The blue Seine rolls her wave,
The Capital of Pleasure sees
The hardly-heard-of grave;—

Farewell! Under the sky we part,
In the stern Alpine dell.
O unstrung will! O broken heart!
A last, a last farewell!

REQUIESCAT

(1853)

Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew!
In quiet she reposes;
Ah, would that I did too!

Her mirth the world required;
She bathed it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty hall of death.

PHILOMELA

(1853)

Hark! ah, the nightingale—
The tawny-throated!
Hark from that moonlit cedar what a burst!
What triumph! hark!—what pain!

O wanderer from a Grecian shore,
Still, after many years, in distant lands,
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain—
Say, will it never heal?
And can this fragrant lawn
With its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,
And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy rack'd heart and brain
Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold,
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?
Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb sister's shame?
Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make resound
With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?
Listen, Eugenia—

How thick the bursts came crowding through the leaves!
Again—thou hearest?
Eternal passion!
Eternal pain!

THE SCHOLAR-GIPSY

(1853)

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropp'd herbage shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green,
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
And here till sun-down, shepherd! will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of the Oxford scholar poor,
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer-morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore,
And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deem'd, to little good.
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,
Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,
Met him, and of his way of life enquired;
Whereat he answer'd, that the gipsy-crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains,
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
"And I," he said, "the secret of their art,
When fully learn'd, will to the world impart;
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill."

This said, he left them, and return'd no more.—
But rumors hung about the countryside,
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of gray,
The same the gipsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,

On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frock'd boors
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer-heats,
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!
Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer-nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bablock-hithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the punt's rope chops round;
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wych-wood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!—
Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemone,
Dark bluebells, drench'd with dews of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none hath words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when haytime's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
Have often pass'd thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Mark'd thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—
But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee eying, all an April-day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;
And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood—
Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of gray,
Above the forest-ground called Thessaly—
The blackbird, picking food,
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray,
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,
And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge,
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climb'd the hill,
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range;
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe;
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—
Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark, red-fruited yew tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire;
Else wert thou long since number'd with the dead!
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst—what we, alas! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Yes, we await it!—but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,

And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear;
With close-lipp'd patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbor to despair—
But none has hope like thine!
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before the strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales
Freshen thy flowers as in former years
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Ægæan Isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine—
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves—
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail;
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the Blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits; and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

HAWORTH CHURCHYARD

(1855) [1]

Where, under Loughrigg, the stream
Of Rotha sparkles, the fields
Are green, in the house of one
Friendly and gentle, now dead,
Wordsworth's son-in-law, friend—
Four years since, on a mark'd
Evening, a meeting I saw.

1 In *Fraser's Magazine.*

Two friends met there, two fam'd
Gifted women.[1] The one,
Brilliant with recent renown,
Young, unpractis'd, had told
With a Master's accent her feign'd
Story of passionate life:
The other, maturer in fame,
Earning, she too, her praise
First in Fiction, had since
Widen'd her sweep, and survey'd
History, Politics, Mind.

They met, held converse: they wrote
In a book which of glorious souls
Held memorial: Bard,
Warrior, Statesman, had left
Their names:—chief treasure of all,
Scott had consign'd there his last
Breathings of song, with a pen
Tottering, a death-stricken hand.

I beheld; the obscure
Saw the famous. Alas!
Years in number, it seem'd,
Lay before both, and a fame
Heighten'd, and multiplied power.
Behold! The elder, to-day,
Lies expecting from Death,
In mortal weakness, a last
Summons: the younger is dead.
First to the living we pay
Mournful homage; the Muse
Gains not an earth-deafen'd ear.

Hail to the steadfast soul,
Which, unflinching and keen,
Wrought to erase from its depth
Mist, and illusion, and fear!
Hail to the spirit which dar'd
Trust its own thoughts, before yet
Echoed her back by the crowd!
Hail to the courage which gave
Voice to its creed, ere the creed
Won consecration from Time!

Turn, O Death, on the vile,
Turn on the foolish the stroke
Hanging now o'er a head
Active, beneficent, pure!
But if the prayer be in vain—
But if the stroke *must* fall—
Her, whom we cannot save,
What might we say to console?

She will not see her country lose
Its greatness, nor the reign of fools prolong'd,
She will behold no more
This ignominious spectacle,
Power dropping from the hand
Of paralytic factions, and no soul
To snatch and wield it: will not see
Her fellow people sit
Helplessly gazing on their own decline.

Myrtle and rose fit the young,
Laurel and oak the mature.
Private affections, for these,
Have run their circle, and left
Space for things far from themselves,
Thoughts of the general weal,
Country and public cares:
Public cares, which move
Seldom and faintly the depth
Of younger passionate souls
Plung'd in themselves, who demand
Only to live by the heart,
Only to love and be lov'd.

How shall we honor the young,
The ardent, the gifted? how mourn?
Console we cannot; her ear
Is deaf. Far northward from here,
In a churchyard high mid the moors
Of Yorkshire, a little earth
Stops it for ever to praise.

Where, behind Keighley, the road
Up to the heart of the moors
Between heath-clad showery hills
Runs, and colliers' carts
Poach the deep ways coming down,
And a rough, grim'd race have their homes—
There, on its slope, is built
The moorland town. But the church
Stands on the crest of the hill,
Lonely and bleak; at its side
The parsonage-house and the graves.

See! in the desolate house
The childless father! Alas—
Age, whom the most of us chide,
Chide, and put back, and delay—
Come, unupbraided for once!
Lay thy benumbing hand,
Gratefully cold on this brow!
Shut out the grief, the despair!
Weaken the sense of his loss!
Deaden the infinite pain!

Another grief I see,
Younger; but this the Muse,
In pity and silent awe
Revering what she cannot soothe,
With veil'd face and bow'd head,
Salutes, and passes by.

1 Charlotte Brontë and Harriet Martineau.

Strew with roses the grave
Of the early-dying. Alas!
Early she goes on the path
To the Silent Country, and leaves
Half her laurels unwon,
Dying too soon: yet green
Laurels she had, and a course
Short, but redoubled by Fame.

For him who must live many years
That life is best which slips away
Out of the light, and mutely; which avoids
Fame, and her less-fair followers, Envy, Strife,
Stupid Detraction, Jealousy, Cabal,
Insincere Praises:—which descends
The mossy quiet track to Age.

But when immature Death
Beckons too early the guest
From the half-tried Banquet of Life,
Young, in the bloom of his days;
Leaves no leisure to press,
Slow and surely, the sweet
Of a tranquil life in the shade—
Fuller for him be the hours!
Give him emotion, though pain!
Let him live, let him feel, *I have liv'd.*
Heap up his moments with life!
Quicken his pulses with Fame!

And not friendless, nor yet
Only with strangers to meet,
Faces ungreeting and cold,
Thou, O Mourn'd One, to-day
Enterest the House of the Grave!
Those of thy blood, whom thou lov'dst,
Have preceded thee; young,
Loving, a sisterly band:
Some in gift, some in art
Inferior; all in fame.
They, like friends, shall receive
This comer, greet her with joy;
Welcome the Sister, the Friend;
Hear with delight of thy fame!

Round thee they lie; the grass
Blows from their graves toward thine.
She, whose genius, though not
Puissant like thine, was yet
Sweet and graceful: and She—
(How shall I sing her?)—whose soul
Knew no fellow for might,
Passion, vehemence, grief,
Daring, since Byron died,
That world-fam'd Son of Fire; She, who sank
Baffled, unknown, self-consum'd;
Whose too bold dying song
Stirr'd, like a clarion-blast, my soul.

Of one too I have heard,
A brother—sleeps he here?—
Of all his gifted race
Not the least gifted; young,
Unhappy, beautiful; the cause
Of many hopes, of many tears.
O Boy, if here thou sleep'st, sleep well!
On thee too did the Muse
Bright in thy cradle smile:
But some dark Shadow came
(I know not what) and interpos'd.

Sleep, O cluster of friends,
Sleep!—or only, when May,
Brought by the West Wind, returns
Back to your native heaths,
And the plover is heard on the moors,
Yearly awake, to behold
The opening summer, the sky,
The shining moorland; to hear
The drowsy bee, as of old,
Hum o'er the thyme, the grouse
Call from the heather in bloom:

Sleep; or only for this
Break your united repose!

STANZAS FROM THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE

(1855) [1]

Through Alpine meadows soft-suffused
With rain, where thick the crocus blows,
Past the dark forges long disused,
The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes.
The bridge is cross'd, and slow we ride,
Through forest, up the mountain-side.

The autumnal evening darkens round,
The wind is up, and drives the rain;
While, hark! far down, with strangled sound
Doth the Dead Guier's stream complain,
Where that wet smoke, among the woods,
Over his boiling cauldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapors white
Past limestone scars with ragged pines,
Showing—then blotting from our sight!—
Halt—through the cloud-drift something shines!
High in the valley, wet and drear,
The huts of Courrerie appear.

1 In *Frazer's Magazine.*

Strike leftward! cries our guide; and higher
Mounts up the stony forest-way.
At last the encircling trees retire;
Look! through the showery twilight gray
What pointed roofs are these advance?—
A palace of the Kings of France?

Approach, for what we seek is here!
Alight, and sparely sup, and wait
For rest in this outbuilding near;
Then cross the sward and reach that gate.
Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come
To the Carthusians' world-famed home.

The silent courts, where night and day
Into their stone-carved basins cold
The splashing icy fountains play—
The humid corridors behold!
Where, ghostlike in the deepening night
Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white.

The chapel, where no organ's peal
Invests the stern and naked prayer—
With penitential cries they kneel
And wrestle: rising then, with bare
And white uplifted faces stand,
Passing the Host from hand to hand;

Each takes, and then his visage wan
Is buried in his cowl once more.
The cells!—the suffering Son of Man
Upon the wall—the knee-worn floor—
And where they sleep, that wooden bed,
Which shall their coffin be, when dead!

The library, where tract and tome
Not to feed priestly pride are there,
To hymn the conquering march of Rome,
Nor yet to amuse, as ours are!
They paint of souls the inner strife,
Their drops of blood, their death in life.

The garden, overgrown—yet mild,
See, fragrant herbs are flowering there!
Strong children of the Alpine wild
Whose culture is the brethren's care;
Of human tasks their only one,
And cheerful works beneath the sun.

Those halls, too, destined to contain
Each its own pilgrim-host of old,
From England, Germany, or Spain—
All are before me! I behold
The House, the Brotherhood austere!
—And what am I, that I am here?

For rigorous teachers seized my youth,
And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,
Show'd me the high, white star of Truth,
There bade me gaze, and there aspire.
Even now their whispers pierce the gloom;
What dost thou in this living tomb?

Forgive me, masters of the mind!
At whose behest I long ago
So much unlearnt, so much resign'd—
I come not here to be your foe!
I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,
To curse and to deny your truth;

Not as their friend, or child, I speak!
But as, on some far northern strand,
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek
In pity and mournful awe might stand
Before some fallen Runic stone—
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—
I come to shed them at their side.

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,
Ye solemn seats of holy pain!
Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round
Till I possess my soul again;
Till free my thoughts before me roll,
Not chafed by hourly false control!

For the world cries your faith is now
But a dead time's exploded dream;
My melancholy, sciolists say,
Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme—
As if the world had ever had
A faith, or sciolists been sad!

Ah, if it *be* pass'd, take away,
At least, the restlessness, the pain;
Be man henceforth no more a prey
To these outdated stings again!
The nobleness of grief is gone—
Ah, leave us not the fret alone!

But—if you cannot give us ease—
Last of the race of them who grieve
Here leave us to die out with these
Last of the people who believe!
Silent, while years engrave the brow;
Silent—the best are silent now.

Achilles ponders in his tent,
The kings of modern thought are dumb;

Silent they are, though not content,
And wait to see the future come.
They have the grief men had of yore,
But they contend and cry no more.

Our fathers water'd with their tears
This sea of time whereon we sail,
Their voices were in all men's ears,
We pass'd within their puissant hail.
Still the same ocean round us raves,
But we stand mute, and watch the waves.

For what avail'd it, all the noise
And outcry of the former men?—
Say, have their sons achieved more joys,
Say, is life lighter now than then;
The sufferers died, they left their pain—
The pangs which tortured them remain.

What helps it now, that Byron bore,
With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,
Through Europe to the Ætolian shore
The pageant of his bleeding heart?
That thousands counted every groan,
And Europe made his woe her own?

What boots it, Shelley! that the breeze
Carried thy lovely wail away,
Musical through Italian trees
Which fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?
Inheritors of thy distress
Have restless hearts one throb the less?

Or are we easier, to have read,
O Obermann! the sad, stern page,
Which tells us how thou hidd'st thy head
From the fierce tempest of thine age
In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,
Or chalets near the Alpine snow?

Ye slumber in your silent grave!—
The world, which for an idle day
Grace to your mood of sadness gave,
Long since hath flung her weeds away.
The eternal trifler breaks your spell;
But we—we learned your lore too well!

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,
More fortunate, alas! than we,
Which without hardness will be sage,
And gay without frivolity.
Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;
But, while we wait, allow our tears!

Allow them! We admire with awe
The exulting thunder of your race:
You give the universe your law,
You triumph over time and space!
Your pride of life, your tireless powers,
We laud them, but they are not ours.

We are like children rear'd in shade
Beneath some old-world abbey wall,
Forgotten in a forest-glade,
And secret from the eyes of all.
Deep, deep the greenwood round them waves,
Their abbey, and its close of graves!

But, where the road runs near the stream,
Oft through the trees they catch a glance
Of passing troops in the sun's beam—
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,
To life, to cities, and to war!

And through the wood, another way,
Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,
Round some fair forest-lodge at morn.
Gay dames are there, in sylvan green;
Laughter and cries—those notes between!

The banners flashing through the trees
Make their blood dance and chain their eyes;
That bugle-music on the breeze
Arrests them with a charm'd surprise.
Banner by turns and bugle woo:
Ye shy recluses, follow too!

O children, what do ye reply?—
"Action and pleasure, will ye roam
Through these secluded dells to cry
And call us?—but too late ye come!
Too late for us your call ye blow,
Whose bent was taken long ago.

"Long since we pace this shadow'd nave;
We watch those yellow tapers shine,
Emblems of hope over the grave,
In the high altar's depth divine;
The organ carries to our ear
Its accents of another sphere.

"Fenced early in this cloistral round
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,
How should we grow in other ground?
How can we flower in foreign air?
—Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease;
And leave our desert to its peace!"

TO MARGUERITE

(1857)

We were apart; yet, day by day,
I bade my heart more constant be.
I bade it keep the world away,

And grow a home for only thee;
Nor fear'd but thy love likewise grew,
Like mine, each day, more tried, more true.

The fault was grave! I might have known,
What far too soon, alas! I learn'd—
The heart can bind itself alone,
And faith may oft be unreturn'd.
Self-sway'd our feelings ebb and swell—
Thou lov'st no more;—Farewell! Farewell!

Farewell!—and thou, thou lonely heart,
Which never yet without remorse
Even for a moment didst depart
From thy remote and spherèd course
To haunt the place where passions reign—
Back to thy solitude again!

Back! with the conscious thrill of shame
Which Luna felt, that summer-night,
Flash through her pure immortal frame,
When she forsook the starry height
To hang over Endymion's sleep
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep.

Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved
How vain a thing is mortal love,
Wandering in Heaven, far removed.
But thou hast long had place to prove
This truth—to prove, and make thine own:
"Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone."

Or, if not quite alone, yet they
Which touch thee are unmating things—
Ocean and clouds and night and day;
Lorn autumns and triumphant springs;
And life, and others' joy and pain,
And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men—for they, at least,
Have *dream'd* two human hearts might blend
In one, and were through faith released
From isolation without end
Prolong'd; nor knew, although not less
Alone than thou, their loneliness.

SAINT BRANDAN

(1860) [1]

Saint Brandan sails the northern main;
The brotherhoods of saints are glad.
He greets them once, he sails again.
So late!—such storms!—The Saint is mad!

He heard across the howling seas
Chime convent bells on wintry nights,
He saw on spray-swept Hebrides
Twinkle the monastery lights;

But north, still north, Saint Brandan steer'd;
And now no bells, no convents more!
The hurtling Polar lights are near'd,
The sea without a human shore.

At last—(it was the Christmas night,
Stars shone after a day of storm)—
He sees float past an iceberg white,
And on it—Christ!—a living form!

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,
Of hair that red and tufted fell—
It is—Oh, where shall Brandan fly?—
The traitor Judas, out of hell!

Palsied with terror, Brandan sate,
The moon was bright, the iceberg near.
He hears a voice sigh humbly: "Wait!
By high permission I am here.

"One moment wait, thou holy man!
On earth my crime, my death, they knew;
My name is under all men's ban;
Ah, tell them of my respite too!

"Tell them, one blessed Christmas night—
(It was the first after I came,
Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,
To rue my guilt in endless flame)—

"I felt, as I in torment lay
'Mid the souls plagued by heavenly power,
An angel touch mine arm, and say:
Go hence, and cool thyself an hour!

" 'Ah, whence this mercy, Lord?' I said.
The Leper recollect, said he,
Who ask'd the passers-by for aid,
In Joppa, and thy charity.

"Then I remember'd how I went,
In Joppa, through the public street,
One morn, when the sirocco spent
Its storms of dust, with burning heat;

"And in the street a Leper sate,
Shivering with fever, naked, old;
Sand raked his sores from heel to pate,
The hot wind fever'd him five-fold.

"He gazed upon me as I pass'd,
And murmur'd: *Help me, or I die!*—

1 *Fraser's Magazine.*

To the poor wretch my cloak I cast,
Saw him look eased, and hurried by.

"Oh, Brandan, think what grace divine,
What blessing must true goodness shower,
If semblance of it faint, like mine,
Hath such inestimable power!

"Well-fed, well-clothed, well-friended, I
Did that chance act of good, that one!
Then went my way to kill and lie—
Forgot my good as soon as done.

"That germ of kindness, in the womb
Of mercy caught, did not expire;
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,
And friends me in the pit of fire.

"Once every year, when carols wake,
On earth, the Christmas night's repose,
Arising from the sinners' lake,
I journey to these healing snows.

"I stanch with ice my burning breast,
With silence balm my whirling brain.
O Brandan! to this hour of rest,
That Joppan leper's ease was pain!"—

Tears started to Saint Brandan's eyes;
He bow'd his head; he breathed a prayer.
When he look'd up—tenantless lies
The iceberg in the frosty air!

THYRSIS

(1866)

A Monody, *to commemorate the author's friend,*
Arthur Hugh Clough, *who died at Florence, 1861*

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!
In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same;
The village street its haunted mansion lacks,
And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks—
Are ye too changed, ye hills?
See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men
To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays!
Here came I often, often, in old days—
Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
Past the high wood, to where the elm-tree crowns
The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?
The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames?—
This winter-eve is warm,
Humid the air! leafless, yet soft as spring,
The tender purple spray on copse and briars!
And that sweet city with her dreaming spires,
She needs not June for beauty's heightening.

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!—
Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power
Befalls me wandering through this upland dim.
Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour;
Now seldom come I, since I came with him.
That single elm-tree bright
Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?
We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,
Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead;
While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here,
But once I knew each field, each flower, each stick;
And with the country-folk acquaintance made
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.
Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd.
Ah me! this many a year
My pipe is lost, my shepherd's holiday!
Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart
Into the world and wave of men depart;
But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest.
He loved each simple joy the country yields,

He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,
For that a shadow lour'd on the fields,
Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.
Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his head.
He went; his piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;
He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks and all the grassy floor
With blossoms red and white of fallen May
And chestnut-flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet fields, through the vext garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with his homely cottage-smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

He harkens not! light comer, he is flown!
What matters it? next year he will return,
And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,
And scent of hay new-mown.
But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see;
See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,
And blow a strain the world at last shall heed—
For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee!

Alack, for Corydon no rival now!—
But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,
Some good survivor with his flute would go,
Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate;
And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,
And relax Pluto's brow,
And make leap up with joy the beauteous head
Of Proserpine, among whose crownèd hair
Are flowers first open'd on Sicilian air,
And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead.

O easy access to the hearer's grace
When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!
For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,
She knew each lily white which Enna yields,
Each rose with blushing face;
She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.
But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!
Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirr'd;
And we should tease her with our plaint in vain!

Well! wind-dispersed and vain the words will be,
Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour
In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill!
Who, if not I, for questing here hath power?
I know the wood which hides the daffodil,
I know the Fyfield tree,
I know what white, what purple fritillaries

The grassy harvest of the river-fields,
Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields,
And what sedged brooks are Thames's tributaries;

I know these slopes; who knows them if not I?—
But many a dingle on the loved hillside,
With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,
Where thick the cowslips grew, and far descried
High tower'd the spikes of purple orchises,
Hath since our day put by
The coronals of that forgotten time;
Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,
And only in the hidden brookside gleam
Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.

Where is the girl, who by the boatman's door,
Above the locks, above the boating throng,
Unmoor'd our skiff when through the Wytham flats,
Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among
And darting swallows and light water-gnats,
We track'd the shy Thames shore?
Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell
Of our boat passing heaved the river-grass,
Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass?—
They all are gone, and thou art gone as well!

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
I see her veil draw soft across the day,
I feel her slowly chilling breath invade
The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with gray;
I feel her finger light
Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;—
The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,
The heart less bounding at emotion new,
And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short
To the less practised eye of sanguine youth;
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,
Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare!
Unbreachable the fort
Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall;
And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,
And near and real the charm of thy repose,
And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
Of quiet!—Look, adown the dusk hill-side,
A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!
From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come,
Quick! let me fly, and cross
Into yon further field!—'Tis done, and see,
Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!

I take the omen! Eve lets down her veil,
The white fog creeps from bush to bush about,
The west unflushes, the high stars grow bright,
And in the scatter'd farms the lights come out.
I cannot reach the signal-tree to-night,
Yet, happy omen, hail!
Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno-vale
(For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep
The morningless and unawakening sleep
Under the flowery oleanders pale),

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our tree is there!—

Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,
These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,
That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him;
To a boon southern country he is fled,
And now in happier air,
Wandering with the great Mother's train divine
(And purer or more subtle soul than thee,
I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see)
Within a folding of the Apennine,

Thou hearest the immortal chants of old!—
Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,
For thee the Lityerses-song again
Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing;
Sings his Sicilian fold,
His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes—
And how a call celestial round him rang,
And heavenward from the fountain-brink he sprang,
And all the marvel of the golden skies.

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
Sole in these fields! yet will I not despair.
Despair I will not, while I yet descry
'Neath the mild canopy of English air
That lonely tree against the western sky.
Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,
Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,
Woods with anemones in flower till May,
Know him a wanderer still; then why not me?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
This does not come with houses or with gold,
With place, with honor, and a flattering crew;
'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold—
But the smooth-slipping weeks
Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;
Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wast bound;
Thou wanderest with me for a little hour!
Men gave thee nothing; but this happy quest,
If men esteemed thee feeble, gave thee power,
If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest.
And this rude Cumner ground,
Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet fields,
Here cams't thou in thy jocund youthful time,
Here was thine height of strength, thy golden prime!
And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields.

What though the music of thy rustic flute
Kept not for long its happy, country tone;
Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note
Of men contention-tost, of men who groan
Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and tired thy throat—
It fail'd and thou wast mute!
Yet hadst thou always visions of our light,
And long with men of care thou couldst not stay.
And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,
Left human haunt, and on alone till night.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!
'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,
Thyrsis! in reach of sheep-bells is my home.
—Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar,
Let in thy voice a whisper often come,

To chase fatigue and fear:
Why faintest thou! I wander'd till I died.
Roam on! The light we sought is shining still.
Dost thou ask proof? Our tree yet crowns the hill,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hillside.

YOUTH AND CALM

(*1852–1867*)

'Tis death! and peace, indeed, is here,
And ease from shame, and rest from fear.
There's nothing can dismarble now
The smoothness of that limpid brow.
But is a calm like this, in truth,
The crowning end of life and youth,
And when this boon rewards the dead,
Are all debts paid, has all been said?
And is the heart of youth so light,
Its step so firm, its eyes so bright,
Because on its hot brow there blows
A wind of promise and repose
From the far grave, to which it goes;
Because it hath the hope to come,
One day, to harbor in the tomb?
Ah no, the bliss youth dreams is one
For daylight, for the cheerful sun,
For feeling nerves and living breath—
Youth dreams a bliss on this side death.
It dreams a rest, if not more deep,
More grateful than this marble sleep;
It hears a voice within it tell:
Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well.
'T is all perhaps which man acquires,
But 'tis not what our youth desires.

WORLDLY PLACE

(1867)

Even in a palace, life may be led well!
So spake the imperial sage, purest of men,
Marcus Aurelius. But the stifling den
Of common life, where, crowded up pell-mell,
Our freedom for a little bread we sell,
And drudge under some foolish master's ken
Who rates us if we peer outside our pen—
Match'd with a palace, is not this a hell?
Even in a palace! On his truth sincere,
Who spoke these words, no shadow ever came;
And when my ill-school'd spirit is aflame
Some nobler, ampler stage of life to win,
I'll stop, and say: "There were no succor here!
The aids to noble life are all within."

AUSTERITY OF POETRY

(1867)

That son of Italy who tried to blow,
Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,
In his light youth amid a festal throng
Sate with his bride to see a public show.
Fair was the bride, and on her front did glow
Youth like a star; and what to youth belong—
Gay raiment, sparkling gauds, elation strong.
A prop gave way! crash fell a platform! lo,
'Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she lay!
Shuddering, they drew her garments off—and found
A robe of sackcloth next the smooth, white skin.
Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,
Radiant, adorn'd outside; a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within.

THE BETTER PART

(1867)

Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare!
"Christ," some one says, "was human as we are;
No judge eyes us from Heaven, our sin to scan;
We live no more, when we have done our span."
"Well, then, for Christ," thou answerest, "who can care?
From sin, which Heaven records not, why forbear?
Live we like brutes our life without a plan!"
So answerest thou; but why not rather say:
"Hath man no second life?—*Pitch this one high!*

Sits there no judge in Heaven, our sin
to see?—
More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!
Was Christ a man like us? *Ah! let us try*
If we then, too, can be such men as he!"

IMMORTALITY

(1867)

Foil'd by our fellow-men, depress'd, out-worn,
We leave the brutal world to take its way,
And, *Patience! in another life,* we say,
The world shall be thrust down, and we up-borne.
And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn
The world's poor, routed leavings? or will they,
Who fail'd under the heat of this life's day,
Support the fervors of the heavenly morn?
No, no! the energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun;
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,
From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.

DOVER BEACH

(1867)

The sea is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

GROWING OLD

(1867)

What is it to grow old?
Is it to lose the glory of the form,
The lustre of the eye?
Is it for beauty to forego her wreath?
—Yes, but not this alone.

Is it to feel our strength—
Not our bloom only, but our strength—decay?
Is it to feel each limb
Grow stiffer, every function less exact,
Each nerve more loosely strung?

Yes, this, and more; but not
Ah, 't is not what in youth we dream'd 't would be!
'T is not to have our life
Mellow'd and soften'd as with sunset-glow,
A golden day's decline.

'T is not to see the world
As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,

And heart profoundly stirr'd;
And weep, and feel the fulness of the past,
The years that are no more.

It is to spend long days
And not once feel that we were ever young;
It is to add, immured
In the hot prison of the present, month
To month with weary pain.

It is to suffer this,
And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel.
Deep in our hidden heart
Festers the dull remembrance of a change,
But no emotion—none.

It is—last stage of all—
When we are frozen up within, and quite
The phantom of ourselves,
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
Which blamed the living man.

THE LAST WORD

(1867)

Creep into thy narrow bed,
Creep, and let no more be said!
Vain thy onset! all stands fast.
Thou thyself must break at last.

Let the long contention cease!
Geese are swans, and swans are geese.
Let them have it how they will!
Thou art tired; best be still.

They out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee?
Better men fared thus before thee;
Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,
Hotly charged—and sank at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall!

BACCHANALIA;

OR,

THE NEW AGE

(1867)

I

The evening comes, the fields are still.
The tinkle of the thirsty rill,
Unheard all day, ascends again;
Deserted is the half-mown plain,
Silent the swaths! the ringing wain,
The mower's cry, the dog's alarms,
All housed within the sleeping farms!
The business of the day is done,
The last-left haymaker is gone.
And from the thyme upon the height,
And from the elder-blossom white
And pale dog-roses in the hedge,
And from the mint-plant in the sedge,
In puffs of balm the night-air blows
The perfume which the day foregoes.
And on the pure horizon far,
See, pulsing with the first-born star,
The liquid sky above the hill!
The evening comes, the fields are still.

Loitering and leaping,
With saunter, with bounds—
Flickering and circling
In files and in rounds—
Gaily their pine-staff green
Tossing in air,
Loose o'er their shoulders white
Showering their hair—
See! the wild Mænads
Break from the wood,
Youth and Iacchus
Maddening their blood.
See! through the quiet land
Rioting they pass—
Fling the fresh heaps about,
Trample the grass.
Tear from the rifled hedge
Garlands, their prize;
Fill with their sports the field,
Fill with their cries.

Shepherd, what ails thee, then?
Shepherd, why mute?
Forth with thy joyous song!
Forth with thy flute!
Tempts not the revel blithe?
Lure not their cries?
Glow not their shoulders smooth?
Melt not their eyes?
Is not, on cheeks like those,
Lovely the flush?
—Ah, so the quiet was!
So was the hush!

II

The epoch ends, the world is still.
The age has talk'd and work'd its fill—
The famous orators have shone,
The famous poets sung and gone,
The famous men of war have fought,
The famous speculators thought,

The famous players, sculptors, wrought,
The famous painters fill'd their wall,
The famous critics judged it all.
The combatants are parted now—
Uphung the spear, unbent the bow,
The puissant crown'd, the weak laid low.
And in the after-silence sweet,
Now strifes are hush'd, our ears doth meet,
Ascending pure, the bell-like fame
Of this or that down-trodden name,
Delicate spirits, push'd away
In the hot press of the noon-day.
And o'er the plain, where the dead age
Did its now silent warfare wage—
O'er that wide plain, now wrapt in gloom,
Where many a splendor finds its tomb,
Many spent fames and fallen mights—
The one or two immortal lights
Rise slowly up into the sky
To shine there everlastingly,
Like stars over the bounding hill.
The epoch ends, the world is still.

Thundering and bursting
In torrents, in waves—
Carolling and shouting
Over tombs, amid graves —
See! on the cumber'd plain
Clearing a stage,
Scattering the past about,
Comes the new age.
Bards make new poems,
Thinkers new schools,
Statesmen new systems,
Critics new rules.
All things begin again;
Life is their prize;
Earth with their deeds they fill,
Fill with their cries.

Poet, what ails thee, then?
Say, why so mute?
Forth with thy praising voice!
Forth with thy flute!
Loiterer! why sittest thou
Sunk in thy dream?
Tempts not the bright new age?
Shines not its stream?
Look, ah, what genius,
Art, science, wit!
Soldiers like Cæsar,
Statesmen like Pitt!
Sculptors like Phidias,
Raphaels in shoals,
Poets like Shakespeare—
Beautiful souls!

See, on their glowing cheeks
Heavenly the flush!
—*Ah, so the silence was!*
So was the hush!

The world but feels the present's spell,
The poet feels the past as well;
Whatever men have done, might do,
Whatever thought, might think it too.

PALLADIUM

(1867)

Set where the upper streams of Simois flow
Was the Palladium, high 'mid rock and wood;
And Hector was in Ilium, far below,
And fought, and saw it not—but there it stood!

It stood, and sun and moonshine rain'd their light
On the pure columns of its glen-built hall,
Backward and forward roll'd the waves of fight
Round Troy—but while this stood, Troy could not fall.

So, in its lovely moonlight, lives the soul.
Mountains surround it and sweet virgin air;
Cold plashing, past it, crystal waters roll;
We visit it by moments, ah, too rare!

We shall renew the battle in the plain
To-morrow; red with blood will Xanthus be;
Hector and Ajax will be there again,
Helen will come upon the wall to see.

Then we shall rust in shade, or shine in strife,
And fluctuate 'twixt blind hopes and blind despairs,
And fancy that we put forth all our life,
And never know how with the soul it fares.

Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,
Upon our life a ruling effluence send.
And when it fails, fight as we will, we die;
And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.

RUGBY CHAPEL

NOVEMBER 1857

(1867)

Coldly, sadly descends
The autumn-evening. The field
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,
Fade into dimness apace,
Silent;—hardly a shout
From a few boys late at their play!
The lights come out in the street,
In the school-room windows;—but cold
Solemn, unlighted, austere,
Through the gathering darkness, arise
The chapel-walls, in whose bound
Thou, my father! art laid.

There thou dost lie in the gloom
Of the autumn evening. But ah!
That word, *gloom*, to my mind
Brings thee back, in the light
Of thy radiant vigor, again;
In the gloom of November we pass'd
Days not dark at thy side;
Seasons impair'd not the ray
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.
Such thou wast! and I stand
In the autumn evening and think
Of bygone autumns with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round
Since thou arosest to tread,
In the summer-morning, the road
Of death, at a call unforeseen,
Sudden. For fifteen years,
We who till then in thy shade
Rested as under the boughs
Of a mighty oak, have endured
Sunshine and rain as we might,
Bare, unshaded, alone,
Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labor-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
Conscious or not of the past,
Still thou performest the word
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—
Prompt, unwearied, as here!
Still thou upraisest with zeal
The humble good from the ground,
Sternly repressest the bad!
Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
Those who with half-open eyes
Tread the border-land dim
Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,
Succorest!—this was thy work;
This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth?—
Most men eddy about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing; and then they die—
Perish;—and no one asks
Who or what they have been,
More than he asks what waves,
In the moonlit solitudes wild
Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
Not with the crowd to be spent,
Not without aim to go round
In an eddy of purposeless dust,
Effort unmeaning and vain.
Ah yes! some of us strive
Not without action to die
Fruitless, but something to snatch
From dull oblivion, nor all
Glut the devouring grave!
We, we have chosen our path—
Path to a clear-purposed goal,
Path of advance!—but it leads
A long, steep journey, through sunk
Gorges, o'er mountains in snow.
Cheerful, with friends, we set forth—
Then on the height, comes the storm.
Thunder crashes from rock
To rock, the cataracts reply,
Lightnings dazzle our eyes.
Roaring torrents have breach'd
The track, the stream-bed descends
In the place where the wayfarer once
Planted his footstep—the spray
Boils o'er its borders! aloft
The unseen snow-beds dislodge
Their hanging ruin; alas,
Havoc is made in our train!
Friends who set forth at our side,
Falter, are lost in the storm.
We, we only are left!
With frowning foreheads, with lips
Sternly compress'd, we strain on,

On—and at nightfall at last
Come to the end of our way,
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;
Where the gaunt and taciturn host
Stands on the threshold, the wind
Shaking his thin white hairs—
Holds his lantern to scan
Our storm-beat figures, and asks:
Whom in our party we bring?
Whom we have left in the snow?

Sadly we answer: We bring
Only ourselves! we lost
Sight of the rest in the storm.
Hardly ourselves we fought through,
Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.
Friends, companions, and train,
The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*
Be saved, my father! *alone*
Conquer and come to thy goal,
Leaving the rest in the wild.
We were weary, and we
Fearful, and we in our march
Fain to drop down and to die.
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.

If, in the paths of the world,
Stones might have wounded thy feet,
Toil or dejection have tried
Thy spirit, of that we saw
Nothing—to us thou wast still
Cheerful, and helpful, and firm!
Therefore to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself;
And, at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd! to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.
And through thee I believe
In the noble and great who are gone;
Pure souls honor'd and blest
By former ages, who else—
Such, so soulless, so poor,
Is the race of men whom I see—
Seem'd but a dream of the heart,
Seem'd but a cry of desire.
Yes! I believe that there lived
Others like thee in the past,
Not like the men of the crowd
Who all round me to-day
Bluster or cringe, and make life
Hideous, and arid, and vile;
But souls temper'd with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good,
Helpers and friends of mankind.

Servants of God!—or sons
Shall I not call you? because
Not as servants ye knew
Your Father's innermost mind,
His, who unwillingly sees
One of his little ones lost—
Yours is the praise, if mankind
Hath not as yet in its march
Fainted, and fallen, and died!

See! In the rocks of the world
Marches the host of mankind,
A feeble, wavering line.
Where are they tending?—A God
Marshall'd them, gave them their goal.
Ah, but the way is so long!
Years they have been in the wild!
Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
Rising all round, overawe;
Factions divide them, their host
Threatens to break, to dissolve.
—Ah, keep, keep them combined!
Else, of the myriads who fill
That army, not one shall arrive;
Sole they shall stray; in the rocks
Stagger for ever in vain.
Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need
Of your fainting, dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardor divine!
Beacons of hope, ye appear!
Languor is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness not on your brow.
Ye alight in our van! at your voice,
Panic, despair, flee away.
Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, re-inspire the brave!
Order, courage, return;
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
Follow your steps as ye go.
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
Stablish, continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God.

OBERMANN ONCE MORE

(1867)

Saves-vous quelque bien qui console du regret d'un monde? OBERMANN.

Glion?—Ah, twenty years, it cuts[1]
All meaning from a name!

[1] Glion, the mountain-village above the castle of Chillon.

White houses prank where once were huts.
Glion, but not the same!

And yet I know not! All unchanged
The turf, the pines, the sky!
The hills in their old order ranged;
The lake, with Chillon by!

And, 'neath those chestnut-trees, where stiff
And stony mounts the way,
The crackling husk-heaps burn, as if
I left them yesterday!

Across the valley, on that slope,
The huts of Avant shine!
Its pines, under their branches, ope
Ways for the pasturing kine.

Full-foaming milk-pails, Alpine fare,
Sweet heaps of fresh-cut grass,
Invite to rest the traveller there
Before he climb the pass—

The gentian-flower'd pass, its crown
With yellow spires aflame;
Whence drops the path to Alliére down,
And walls where Byron came.

By their green river, who doth change
His birth-name just below;
Orchard, and croft, and full-stored grange
Nursed by his pastoral flow.

But stop!—to fetch back thoughts that stray
Beyond this gracious bound,
The cone of Jaman, pale, and gray,
See, in the blue profound!

Ah, Jaman! delicately tall
Above his sun-warm'd firs—
What thoughts to me his rocks recall,
What memories he stirs!

And who but thou must be, in truth,
Obermann! with me here?
Thou master of my wandering youth,
But left this many a year!

Yes, I forget the world's work wrought,
Its warfare waged with pain;
An eremite with thee, in thought
Once more I slip my chain,

And to thy mountain-chalet come,
And lie beside its door,
And hear the wild bee's Alpine hum,
And thy sad, tranquil lore!

Again I feel the words inspire
Their mournful calm; serene,
Yet tinged with infinite desire
For all that *might* have been—

The harmony from which man swerved
Made his life's rule once more!
The universal order served,
Earth happier than before!

—While thus I mused, night gently ran
Down over hill and wood.
Then, still and sudden, Obermann
On the grass near me stood.

Those pensive features well I knew,
On my mind, years before,
Imaged so oft! imaged so true!
—A shepherd's garb he wore,

A mountain-flower was in his hand,
A book was in his breast.
Bent on my face, with gaze which scann'd
My soul, his eyes did rest.

"And is it thou," he cried, "so long
Held by the world which we
Loved not, who turnest from the throng
Back to thy youth and me?

"And from thy world, with heart opprest,
Choosest thou *now* to turn?—
Ah me! we anchorites read things best,
Clearest their course discern!

"Thou fledst me when the ungenial earth,
Man's work-place, lay in gloom.
Return'st thou in her hour of birth,
Of hopes and hearts in bloom?

"Perceiv'st thou not the change of day?
Ah! Carry back thy ken,
What, some two thousand years! Survey
The world as it was then!

"Like ours it look'd in outward air.
Its head was clear and true,
Sumptuous its clothing, rich its fare,
No pause its action knew;

"Stout was its arm, each thew and bone
Seem'd puissant and alive—
But, ah! its heart, its heart was stone,
And so it could not thrive!

"On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell.
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.

"In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
The Roman noble lay;
He drove abroad, in furious guise,
Along the Appian way.

"He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
And crown'd his hair with flowers—
No easier nor no quicker pass'd
The impracticable hours.

"The brooding East with awe beheld
Her impious younger world.
The Roman tempest swell'd and swell'd,
And on her head was hurl'd.

"The East bow'd low before the blast
In patient, deep disdain;
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.

"So well she mused, a morning broke
Across her spirit gray;
A conquering, new-born joy awoke,
And fill'd her life with day.

"'Poor world,' she cried, 'so deep accurst,
That runn'st from pole to pole
To seek a draught to slake thy thirst—
Go, seek it in thy soul!'

"She heard it, the victorious West,
In crown and sword array'd!
She felt the void which mined her breast,
She shiver'd and obey'd.

"She veil'd her eagles, snapp'd her sword,
And laid her sceptre down;
Her stately purple she abhorr'd,
And her imperial crown.

"She broke her flutes, she stopp'd her sports,
Her artists could not please;
She tore her books, she shut her courts,
She fled her palaces;

"Lust of the eye and pride of life
She left it all behind,
And hurried, torn with inward strife,
The wilderness to find.

"Tears wash'd the trouble from her face!
She changed into a child!
'Mid weeds and wrecks she stood—a place
Of ruin—but she smiled!

"Oh, had I lived in that great day,
How had its glory new
Fill'd earth and heaven, and caught away
My ravish'd spirit too!

"No thoughts that to the world belong
Had stood against the wave
Of love which set so deep and strong
From Christ's then open grave.

"No cloister-floor of humid stone
Had been too cold for me.
For me no Eastern desert lone
Had been too far to flee.

"No lonely life had pass'd too slow,
When I could hourly scan
Upon his Cross, with head sunk low,
That nail'd, thorn-crownèd Man!

"Could see the Mother with her Child
Whose tender winning arts
Have to his little arms beguiled
So many wounded hearts!

"And centuries came and ran their course,
And unspent all that time
Still, still went forth that Child's dear force,
And still was at its prime.

"Ay, ages long endured his span
Of life—'tis true received—
That gracious Child, that thorn-crown'd Man!
—He lived while we believed.

"While we believed, on earth he went,
And open stood his grave.
Men call'd from chamber, church, and tent;
And Christ was by to save.

"Now he is dead! Far hence he lies
In the lorn Syrian town;
And on his grave, with shining eyes,
The Syrian stars look down.

"In vain men still, with hoping new,
Regard his death-place dumb,
And say the stone is not yet to,
And wait for words to come.

"Ah, o'er that silent sacred land,
Of sun, and arid stone,
And crumbling wall, and sultry sand,
Sounds now one word alone!

"Unduped of fancy, henceforth man
Must labor!—must resign
His all too human creeds and scan
Simply the way divine!

"But slow that tide of common thought,
Which bathed our life, retired;
Slow, slow the old world wore to nought,
And pulse by pulse expired.

"Its frame yet stood without a breach
When blood and warmth were fled;
And still it spake its wonted speech—
But every word was dead.

"And oh, we cried, that on this corse
Might fall a freshening storm!
Rive its dry bones, and with new force
A new-sprung world inform!

"—Down came the storm! O'er France it pass'd
In sheets of scathing fire;
All Europe felt that fiery blast,
And shook as it rush'd by her.

"Down came the storm! In ruins fell
The worn-out world we knew.
—It pass'd, that elemental swell!
Again appear'd the blue;

"The sun shone in the new-wash'd sky,
And what from heaven saw he?
Blocks of the past, like icebergs high,
Float on a rolling sea!

"Upon them plies the race of man
All it before endeavor'd;
'Ye live,' I cried, 'ye work and plan,
And know not ye are sever'd!

" 'Poor fragments of a broken world
Whereon men pitch their tent!
Why were ye too to death not hurl'd
When your world's day was spent?

" 'That glow of central fire is done
Which with its fusing flame
Knit all your parts, and kept you one—
But ye, ye are the same!

" 'The past, its mask of union on,
Had ceased to live and thrive.
The past, its mask of union gone,
Say, is it more alive?

" 'Your creeds are dead, your rites are dead,
Your social order too!
Where tarries he, the Power who said:
See, I make all things new?

" 'The millions suffer still, and grieve,
And what can helpers heal
With old-world cures men half believe
For woes they wholly feel?

" 'And yet men have such need of joy!
But joy whose grounds are true;
And joy that should all hearts employ
As when the past was new.

" 'Ah, not the emotion of that past,
Its common hope, were vain!
Some new such hope must dawn at last,
Or man must toss in pain.

" 'But now the old is out of date,
The new is not yet born,
And who can be alone *elate,*
While the world lies forlorn?'

"Then to the wilderness I fled.—
There among Alpine snows
And pastoral huts I hid my head,
And sought and found repose.

"It was not yet the appointed hour.
Sad, patient, and resign'd,
I watch'd the crocus fade and flower,
I felt the sun and wind.

"The day I lived in was not mine,
Man gets no second day.
In dreams I saw the future shine—
But ah! I could not stay!

"Action I had not, followers, fame;
I pass'd obscure, alone.
The after-world forgets my name,
Nor do I wish it known.

"Composed to bear, I lived and died,
And knew my life was vain,
With fate I murmur not, nor chide.
At Sèvres by the Seine

"(If Paris that brief flight allow)
My humble tomb explore!
It bears: *Eternity, be thou*
My refuge! and no more.

"But thou, whom fellowship of mood
Did make from haunts of strife
Come to my mountain-solitude,
And learn my frustrate life;

"O thou, who, ere thy flying span
Was past of cheerful youth,
Didst find the solitary man
And love his cheerless truth—

"Despair not thou as I despair'd,
Nor be cold bloom thy prison!

Forward the gracious hours have fared,
And see! the sun is risen!

"He breaks the winter of the past;
A green, new earth appears.
Millions, whose life in ice lay fast,
Have thoughts, and smiles, and tears.

"What though there still need effort, strife?
Though much be still unwon?
Yet warm it mounts, the hour of life!
Death's frozen hour is done!

"The world's great order dawns in sheen,
After long darkness rude,
Divinelier imaged, clearer seen,
With happier zeal pursued.

"With hope extinct and brow composed
I mark'd the present die;
Its term of life was nearly closed,
Yet it had more than I.

"But thou, though to the world's new hour
Thou come with aspect marr'd,
Shorn of the joy, the bloom, the power
Which best befits its bard—

"Though more than half thy years be past,
And spent thy youthful prime;
Though, round thy firmer manhood cast
Hang weeds of our sad time

"Whereof thy youth felt all the spell,
And traversed all the shade—
Though late, though dimm'd, though weak, yet tell
Hope to a world new-made!

"Help it to fill that deep desire,
The want which rack'd our brain,
Consumed our heart with thirst like fire,
Immedicable pain;

"Which to the wilderness drove out
Our life, to Alpine snow,
And palsied all our word with doubt,
And all our work with woe—

"What still of strength is left, employ,
This end to help attain:
One common wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind again!"

—The vision ended. I awoke
As out of sleep, and no
Voice moved;—only the torrent broke
The silence, far below.

Soft darkness on the turf did lie.
Solemn, o'er hut and wood,
In the yet star-sown nightly sky,
The peak of Jaman stood.

Still in my soul the voice I heard
Of Obermann!—away
I turn'd; by some vague impulse stirr'd,
Along the rocks of Naye

Past Sonchaud's piny flanks I gaze
And the blanch'd summit bare
Of Malatrait, to where in haze
The Valais opens fair,

And the domed Velan, with his snows,
Behind the upcrowding hills,
Doth all the heavenly opening close
Which the Rhone's murmur fills;—

And glorious there, without a sound,
Across the glimmering lake,
High in the Valais-depth profound,
I saw the morning break.

HEINE'S GRAVE

(1867)

"Henri Heine"—'tis here!
The black tombstone, the name
Carved there—no more! and the smooth,
Swarded alleys, the limes
Touch'd with yellow by hot
Summer, but under them still
In September's bright afternoon
Shadow, and verdure, and cool!
Trim Montmartre! the faint
Murmur of Paris outside;
Crisp everlasting-flowers,
Yellow and black, on the graves.

Half blind, palsied, in pain,
Hither to come, from the streets'
Uproar, surely not loath
Wast thou, Heine!—to lie
Quiet! to ask for closed
Shutters, and darken'd room,
And cool drinks, and an eased
Posture, and opium, no more!
Hither to come, and to sleep
Under the wings of Renown.

Ah! not little, when pain
Is most quelling, and man
Easily quell'd, and the fine
Temper of genius alive
Quickest to ill, is the praise
Not to have yielded to pain!

No small boast, for a weak
Son of mankind, to the earth
Pinn'd by the thunder, to rear
His bolt-scathed front to the stars;
And, undaunted, retort
'Gainst thick-crashing, insane,
Tyrannous tempests of bale,
Arrowy lightnings of soul!
Hark! through the alley resounds
Mocking laughter! A film
Creeps o'er the sunshine; a breeze
Ruffles the warm afternoon,
Saddens my soul with its chill.
Gibing of spirits in scorn
Shakes every leaf of the grove,
Mars the benignant repose
Of this amiable home of the dead.

Bitter spirits! ye claim
Heine?—Alas, he is yours!
Only a moment I long'd
Here in the quiet to snatch
From such mates the outworn
Poet, and steep him in calm.
Only a moment! I knew
Whose he was who is here
Buried, I knew he was yours!
Ah, I knew that I saw
Here no sepulchre built
In the laurell'd rock, o'er the blue
Naples bay, for a sweet
Tender Virgil! no tomb
On Ravenna sands, in the shade
Of Ravenna pines, for a high
Austere Dante! no grave
By the Avon side, in the bright
Stratford meadows, for thee,
Shakespeare! loveliest of souls,
Peerless in radiance, in joy.

What so harsh and malign,
Heine! distils from thy life,
Poisons the peace of thy grave?

I chide with thee not, that thy sharp
Upbraidings often assail'd
England, my country; for we,
Fearful and sad, for her sons,
Long since, deep in our hearts,
Echo the blame of her foes.
We, too, sigh that she flags;
We, too, say that she now,
Scarce comprehending the voice
Of her greatest, golden-mouth'd sons
Of a former age any more,
Stupidly travels her round
Of mechanic business, and lets
Slow die out of her life
Glory, and genius, and joy.

So thou arraign'st her, her foe;
So we arraign her, her sons.

Yes, we arraign her! but she,
The weary Titan! with deaf
Ears, and labor-dimm'd eyes,
Regarding neither to right
Nor left, goes passively by,
Staggering on to her goal;
Bearing on shoulders immense,
Atlantean, the load,
Wellnigh not to be borne,
Of the too vast orb of her fate.

But was it thou—I think
Surely it was—that bard
Unnamed, who, Goethe said,
Had every other gift, but wanted love;
Love, without which the tongue
Even of angels sounds amiss?

Charm is the glory which makes
Song of the poet divine;
Love is the fountain of charm.
How without charm wilt thou draw,
Poet! the world to thy way?
Not by the lightnings of wit!
Not by the thunder of scorn!
These to the world, too, are given;
Wit it possesses, and scorn—
Charm is the poet's alone.
Hollow and dull are the great,
And artists envious, and the mob profane.
We know all this, we know!
Cam'st thou from heaven, O child
Of light! but this to declare?
Alas! to help us forget
Such barren knowledge awhile,
God gave the poet his song.

Therefore a secret unrest
Tortured thee, brilliant and bold!
Therefore triumph itself
Tasted amiss to thy soul.
Therefore, with blood of thy foes,
Trickled in silence thine own.
Therefore the victor's heart
Broke on the field of his fame.

Ah! as of old, from the pomp
Of Italian Milan, the fair
Flower of marble of white
Southern palaces—steps
Bordered by statues, and walks
Terraced, and orange bowers
Heavy with fragrance—the blond
German Kaiser full oft
Long'd himself back to the fields,
Rivers, and high-roof'd towns

Of his native Germany; so,
So, how often! from hot
Paris drawing-rooms, and lamps
Blazing, and brilliant crowds,
Starr'd and jewell'd, of men
Famous, of women the queens
Of dazzling converse, and fumes
Of praise—hot, heady fumes, to the poor brain
That mount, that madden!—how oft
Heine's spirit outworn
Long'd itself out of the din
Back to the tranquil, the cool
Far German home of his youth!

See! in the May afternoon,
O'er the fresh short turf of the Hartz,
A youth, with the foot of youth,
Heine! thou climbest again.
Up, through the tall dark firs
Warming their heads in the sun,
Chequering the grass with their shade—
Up, by the stream with its huge
Moss-hung boulders and thin
Musical water half-hid—
Up, o'er the rock-strewn slope,
With the sinking sun, and the air
Chill, and the shadows now
Long on the grey hillside—
To the stone-roof'd hut at the top.

Or, yet later, in watch
On the roof of the Brocken tower
Thou standest, gazing! to see
The broad red sun, over field,
Forest and city and spire
And mist-track'd stream of the wide
Wide German land, going down
In a bank of vapors—again
Standest! at nightfall, alone.

Or, next morning, with limbs
Rested by slumber, and heart
Freshen'd and light with the May,
O'er the gracious spurs coming down
Of the Lower Hartz, among oaks,
And beechen coverts, and copse
Of hazels green in whose depth
Ilse, the fairy transform'd,
In a thousand water-breaks light
Pours her petulant youth—
Climbing the rock which juts
O'er the valley, the dizzily perch'd
Rock! to its Iron Cross
Once more thou cling'st; to the Cross
Clingest! with smiles, with a sigh.

Goethe, too, had been there.[1]
In the long past winter he came
To the frozen Hartz, with his soul
Passionate, eager, his youth
All in ferment;—but he
Destined to work and to live
Left it, and thou, alas!
Only to laugh and to die.

But something prompts me: Not thus
Take leave of Heine, not thus
Speak the last word at his grave!
Not in pity and not
With half censure—with awe
Hail, as it passes from earth
Scattering lightnings, that soul!

The spirit of the world
Beholding the absurdity of men—
Their vaunts, their feats—let a sardonic smile
For one short moment wander o'er his lips.
That smile was Heine! for its earthly hour
The strange guest sparkled; now 'tis pass'd away.

That was Heine! and we,
Myriads who live, who have lived,
What are we all, but a mood,
A single mood, of the life
Of the Being in whom we exist,
Who alone is all things in one.

Spirit, who fillest us all!
Spirit, who utterest in each
New-coming son of mankind
Such of thy thoughts as thou wilt!
O thou, one of whose moods,
Bitter and strange, was the life
Of Heine—his strange, alas!
His bitter life—may a life
Other and milder be mine!
May'st thou a mood more serene,
Happier, have utter'd in mine!
May'st thou the rapture of peace
Deep have embreathed at its core!
Made it a ray of thy thought!
Made it a beat of thy joy!

1 See "Harzreise im Winter," in Goethe's *Gedichte.*

COVENTRY PATMORE (1823–1896)

From *THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE*

(1853–1860)

THE PARAGON

When I behold the skies aloft
  Passing the pageantry of dreams,
The cloud whose bosom, cygnet-soft,
  A couch for nuptial Juno seems,
The ocean broad, the mountains bright,
  The shadowy vales with feeding herds,
I from my lyre the music smite,
  Nor want for justly matching words.
All forces of the sea and air,
  All interests of hill and plain,
I so can sing, in seasons fair,
  That who hath felt may feel again.
Elated oft by such free songs,
  I think with utterance free to raise
That hymn for which the whole world longs,
  A worthy hymn in woman's praise;
A hymn bright-noted like a bird's,
  Arousing these song-sleepy times
With rhapsodies of perfect words,
  Ruled by returning kiss of rhymes.
But when I look on her and hope
  To tell with joy what I admire,
My thoughts lie cramp'd in narrow scope,
  Or in the feeble birth expire;
No mystery of well-woven speech,
  No simplest phrase of tenderest fall,
No liken'd excellence can reach
  Her, the most excellent of all,
The best half of creation's best,
  Its heart to feel, its eye to see,
The crown and complex of the rest,
  Its aim and its epitome.
Nay, might I utter my conceit,
  'Twere after all a vulgar song,
For she's so simply, subtly sweet,
  My deepest rapture does her wrong.
Yet is it now my chosen task
  To sing her worth as Maid and Wife;
Nor happier post than this I ask,
  To live her laureate all my life.
On wings of love uplifted free,
  And by her gentleness made great,
I'll teach how noble man should be
  To match with such a lovely mate;
And then in her may move the more
  The woman's wish to be desired,
(By praise increased), till both shall soar,
  With blissful emulations fired.
And, as geranium, pink, or rose
  Is thrice itself through power of art,
So may my happy skill disclose
  New fairness even in her fair heart;
Until that churl shall nowhere be
  Who bends not, awed, before the throne
Of her affecting majesty,
  So meek, so far unlike our own;
Until (for who may hope too much
  From her who wields the powers of love?)
Our lifted lives at last shall touch
  That happy goal to which they move;
Until we find, as darkness rolls
  Away, and evil mists dissolve,
The nuptial contrasts are the poles
  On which the heavenly spheres revolve.

HONORIA

1

Grown weary with a week's exile
  From those fair friends, I rode to see
The church-restorings; lounged awhile,
  And met the Dean; was ask't to tea,
And found their cousin, Frederick Graham,
  At Honor's side. Was I concern'd,
If, when she sang, his color came,
  That mine, as with a buffet, burn'd?
A man to please a girl! thought I,
  Retorting his forced smiles, the shrouds
Of wrath, so hid as she was by,
  Sweet moon between her lighted clouds!

2

Whether this Cousin was the cause
  I know not, but I seem'd to see,
The first time then, how fair she was,
  How much the fairest of the three.
Each stopp'd to let the other go;

But, time-bound, he arose the first.
Stay'd he in Sarum long? If so
I hoped to see him at the Hurst.
No: he had call'd here, on his way
To Portsmouth, where the "Arrogant,"
His ship, was; he should leave next day,
For two years' cruise in the Levant.

3

Had love in her yet struck its germs?
I watch'd. Her farewell show'd me plain
She loved, on the majestic terms
That she should not be loved again.
And so her cousin, parting, felt.
Hope in his voice and eye was dead.
Compassion did my malice melt;
Then went I home to a restless bed.
I, who admired her too, could see
His infinite remorse at this
Great mystery, that she should be
So beautiful, yet not be his,
And, pitying, long'd to plead his part;
But scarce could tell, so strange my whim,
Whether the weight upon my heart
Was sorrow for myself or him.

4

She was all mildness; yet 'twas writ
In all her grace, most legibly,
"He that's for heaven itself unfit,
Let him not hope to merit me."
And such a challenge, quite apart
From thoughts of love, humbled, and thus
To sweet repentance moved my heart,
And made me more magnanimous,
And led me to review my life,
Inquiring where in aught the least,
If question were of her for wife,
Ill might be mended, hope increas'd.
Not that I soar'd so far above
Myself, as this great hope to dare;
And yet I well foresaw that love
Might hope where reason must despair;
And, half-resenting the sweet pride
Which would not ask me to admire,
"Oh," to my secret heart I sigh'd,
"That I were worthy to desire!"

5

As drowsiness my brain reliev'd,
A shrill defiance of all to arms,
Shriek'd by the stable-cock, receiv'd
An angry answer from three farms.
And, then, I dream'd that I, her knight,
A clarion's haughty pathos heard,
And rode securely to the fight,
Cased in the scarf she had conferr'd;
And there, the bristling lists behind,
Saw many, and vanquish'd all I saw
Of her unnumber'd cousin-kind,
In Navy, Army, Church, and Law;
Smitten, the warriors somehow turn'd
To Sarum choristers, whose song,
Mix'd with celestial sorrow, yearn'd
With joy no memory can prolong;
And phantasms as absurd and sweet
Merged each in each in endless chace,
And everywhere I seem'd to meet
The haunting fairness of her face.

THE COMPARISON

Where she succeeds with cloudless brow,
In common and in holy course,
He fails, in spite of prayer and vow
And agonies of faith and force;
Or, if his suit with Heaven prevails
To righteous life, his virtuous deeds
Lack beauty, virtue's badge; she fails
More graciously than he succeeds.
Her spirit, compact of gentleness,
If Heaven postpones or grants her pray'r,
Conceives no pride in its success,
And in its failure no despair;
But his, enamour'd of its hurt,
Baffled, blasphemes, or, not denied,
Crows from the dunghill of desert,
And wags its ugly wings for pride.
He's never young nor ripe; she grows
More infantine, auroral, mild,
And still the more she lives and knows
The lovelier she's expressed a child.
Say that she wants the will of man
To conquer fame, not check'd by cross,
Nor moved when others bless or ban;
She wants but what to have were loss.
Or say she wants the patient brain
To track shy truth; her facile wit
At that which he hunts down with pain
Flies straight, and does exactly hit.
Were she but half of what she is,
He twice himself, mere love alone,
Her special crown, as truth is his,
Gives title to the worthier throne;
For love is substance, truth the form;
Truth without love were less than nought;
But blindest love is sweet and warm,
And full of truth not shaped by thought:
And therefore in herself she stands
Adorn'd with undeficient grace,

Her happy virtues taking hands,
  Each smiling in another's face.
So dancing round the Tree of Life,
  They make an Eden in her breast,
While his, disjointed and at strife,
  Proud-thoughted, do not bring him rest.

LOVE JUSTIFIED

What if my pole-star of respect
  Be dim to others? Shall their "Nay,"
Presumably their own defect,
  Invalidate my heart's strong, "Yea"?
And can they rightly me condemn,
  If I, with partial love, prefer?
I am not more unjust to them,
  But only not unjust to her.
Leave us alone! After awhile,
  This pool of private charity
Shall make its continent an isle,
  And roll, a world-embracing sea;
This foolish zeal of lip for lip,
  This fond, self-sanction'd, wilful zest,
Is that elect relationship
  Which forms and sanctions all the rest;
This little germ of nuptial love,
  Which springs so simply from the sod,
The root is, as my song shall prove,
  Of all our love to man and God.

SARUM PLAIN

1

Breakfast enjoy'd, 'mid hush of boughs
  And perfumes thro' the windows blown;
Brief worship done, which still endows
  The day with beauty not its own;
With intervening pause, that paints
  Each act with honor, life with calm
(As old processions of the Saints
  At every step have wands of palm),
We rose; the ladies went to dress,
  And soon return'd with smiles; and then,
Plans fix'd, to which the Dean said "Yes,"
  Once more we drove to Salisbury Plain.
We past my house (observed with praise
  By Mildred, Mary acquiesced),
And left the old and lazy grays
  Below the hill, and walk'd the rest.

2

The moods of love are like the wind,
  And none knows whence or why they rise:
I ne'er before felt heart and mind
  So much affected through mine eyes.
How cognate with the flatter'd air,
  How form'd for earth's familiar zone,
She moved; how feeling and how fair
  For others' pleasure and her own!
And, ah, the heaven of her face!
  How, when she laugh'd, I seem'd to see
The gladness of the primal grace,
  And how, when grave, its dignity!
Of all she was, the least not less
  Delighted the devoted eye;
No fold or fashion of her dress
  Her fairness did not sanctify.
I could not else than grieve. What cause?
  Was I not blest? Was she not there?
Likely my own: Ah, that it was:
  How like seem'd "likely" to despair!

3

And yet to see her so benign,
  So honorable and womanly,
In every maiden kindness mine,
  And full of gayest courtesy,
Was pleasure so without alloy,
  Such unreproved, sufficient bliss,
I almost wish'd the while, that joy
  Might never further go than this.
So much it was as now to walk,
  And humbly by her gentle side
Observe her smile and hear her talk,
  Could it be more to call her Bride?
I feign'd her won; the mind finite,
  Puzzled and fagg'd by stress and strain
To comprehend the whole delight,
  Made bliss more hard to bear than pain.
All good, save heart to hold, so summ'd
  And grasp'd, the thought smote, like a knife,
How laps'd mortality had numb'd
  The feelings to the feast of life;
How passing good breathes sweetest breath;
  And love itself at highest reveals
More black than bright, commending death
  By teaching how much life conceals.

4

But happier passions these subdued,
  When from the close and sultry lane,
With eyes made bright by what they view'd,
  We emerged upon the mounded Plain.
As to the breeze a flag unfurls,
  My spirit expanded, sweetly embraced
By those same gusts that shook her curls
  And vex'd the ribbon at her waist.

To the future cast I future cares;
Breathed with a heart unfreighted, free,
And laugh'd at the presumptuous airs
That with her muslins folded me;
Till, one vague rack along my sky,
The thought that she might ne'er be mine
Lay half forgotten by the eye
So feasted with the sun's warm shine.

5

By the great stones we chose our ground
For shade; and there, in converse sweet,
Took luncheon. On a little mound
Sat the three ladies; at their feet
I sat; and smelt the heathy smell,
Pluck'd harebells, turn'd the telescope
To the country round. My life went well,
For once, without the wheels of hope;
And I despised the Druid rocks
That scowl'd their chill gloom from above,
Like churls whose stolid wisdom mocks
The lightness of immortal love.
And, as we talk'd, my spirit quaff'd
The sparkling winds; the candid skies
At our untruthful strangeness laugh'd;
I kiss'd with mine her smiling eyes;
And sweet familiarness and awe
Prevail'd that hour on either part,
And in the eternal light I saw
That she was mine; though yet my heart
Could not conceive, nor would confess
Such contentation; and there grew
More form and more fair stateliness
Than heretofore between us two.

THE ABDICATION

1

From little signs, like little stars,
Whose faint impression on the sense
The very looking straight at mars,
Or only seen by confluence;
From instinct of a mutual thought,
Whence sanctity of manners flow'd;
From chance unconscious, and from what
Concealment, overconscious, show'd;
Her hand's less weight upon my arm,
Her lowlier mien; that match'd with this;
I found, and felt with strange alarm,
I stood committed to my bliss.

2

I grew assured, before I ask'd,
That she'd be mine without reserve,
And in her unclaim'd graces bask'd,
At leisure, till the time should serve,
With just enough of dread to thrill
The hope, and make it trebly dear;
Thus loth to speak the word to kill
Either the hope or happy fear.

3

Till once, through lanes returning late,
Her laughing sisters lagg'd behind;
And, ere we reach'd her father's gate,
We paused with one presentient mind;
And, in the dim and perfumed mist,
Their coming stay'd, who, friends to me,
And very women, loved to assist
Love's timid opportunity.

4

Twice rose, twice died my trembling word;
The faint and frail Cathedral chimes
Spake time in music, and we heard
The chafers rustling in the limes.
Her dress, that touch'd me where I stood,
The warmth of her confided arm,
Her bosom's gentle neighborhood,
Her pleasuré in her power to charm;
Her look, her love, her form, her touch,
The least seem'd most by blissful turn,
Blissful but that it pleased too much,
And taught the wayward soul to yearn.
It was as if a harp with wires
Was traversed by the breath I drew;
And, oh, sweet meeting of desires,
She, answering, owned that she loved too.

5

Honoria was to be my bride;
The hopeless heights of hope were scaled;
The summit won, I paused and sigh'd,
As if success itself had fail'd.
It seem'd as if my lips approach'd
To touch at Tantalus' reward,
And rashly on Eden life encroach'd,
Half-blinded by the flaming sword.
The whole world's wealthiest and its best,
So fiercely sought, appear'd, when found,
Poor in its need to be possess'd,
Poor from its very want of bound.
My queen was crouching at my side,
By love unsceptred and brought low,
Her awful garb of maiden pride
All melted into tears like snow;
The mistress of my reverent thought,
Whose praise was all I ask'd of fame,

In my close-watch'd approval sought
Protection as from danger and blame;
Her soul, which late I loved to invest
With pity for my poor desert,
Buried its face within my breast,
Like a pet fawn by hunters hurt.

ACCEPTED

1

What fortune did my heart foretell?
What shook my spirit, as I woke,
Like the vibration of a bell
Of which I had not heard the stroke?
Was it some happy vision shut
From memory by the sun's fresh ray?
Was it that linnet's song; or but
A natural gratitude for day?
Or the mere joy the senses weave,
A wayward ecstasy of life?
Then I remember'd, yester-eve
I won Honoria for my Wife.

2

Forth riding, while as yet the day
Was dewy, watching Sarum Spire,
Still beckoning me along my way,
And growing every minute higher,
I reach'd the Dean's. One blind was down,
Though nine then struck. My bride to be!
And had she rested ill, my own,
With thinking (oh my heart!) of me?
I paced the streets; a pistol chose,
To guard my now important life
When riding late from Sarum Close;
At noon return'd. Good Mrs. Fife,
To my "The Dean, is he at home?"
Said, "No, Sir; but Miss Honor is";
And straight, not asking if I'd come,
Announced me, "Mr. Felix, Miss,"
To Mildred, in the Study. There
We talk'd, she working. We agreed
The day was fine; the Fancy-Fair
Successful; "Did I ever read
De Genlis?" "Never." "Do!" She heard
"I was engaged." "To whom?" "Miss Fry."
"Was it the fact?" "No!" "On my word?"
"What scandal people talk'd!" "Would I
Hold out this skein of silk." So pass'd
I knew not how much time away.
"How were her sisters?" "Well." At last
I summon'd heart enough to say,
"I hoped to see Miss Churchill too."
"Miss Churchill, Felix! What is this?
I said, and now I find 'tis true,
Last night you quarrell'd! Here she is."

3

She came, and seem'd a morning rose
When ruffling rain has paled its blush;
Her crown once more was on her brows;
And, with a faint, indignant flush,
And fainter smile, she gave her hand,
But not her eyes, then sate apart,
As if to make me understand
The honor of her vanquish'd heart.
But I drew humbly to her side;
And she, well pleased, perceiving me
Liege ever to the noble pride
Of her unconquer'd majesty,
Once and for all put it away;
The faint flush pass'd; and, thereupon,
Her loveliness, which rather lay
In light than color, smiled and shone,
Till sick was all my soul with bliss;
Or was it with remorse and ire
Of such a sanctity as this
Subdued by love to my desire?

THE RAINBOW

A stately rainbow came and stood,
When I was young, in High-Hurst Park;
Its bright feet lit the hill and wood
Beyond, and cloud and sward were dark;
And I, who thought the splendor ours
Because the place was, t'wards it flew,
And there, amidst the glittering showers,
Gazed vainly for the glorious view.
With whatsoever's lovely, know
It is not ours; stand off to see,
Or beauty's apparition so
Puts on invisibility.

THE MARRIED LOVER

Why, having won her, do I woo?
Because her spirit's vestal grace
Provokes me always to pursue,
But, spirit-like, eludes embrace;
Because her womanhood is such
That, as on court-days subjects kiss
The Queen's hand, yet so near a touch
Affirms no mean familiarness,
Nay, rather marks more fair the height
Which can with safety so neglect
To dread, as lower ladies might,
That grace could meet with disrespect,
Thus she with happy flavor feeds
Allegiance from a love so high
That thence no false conceit proceeds

Of difference bridged, or state put by;
Because, although in act and word
As lowly as a wife can be,
Her manners, when they call me lord,
Remind me 'tis by courtesy;
Not with her least consent of will,
Which would my proud affection hurt,
But by the noble style that still
Imputes an unattain'd desert;
Because her gay and lofty brows,
When all is won which hope can ask,
Reflect a light of hopeless snows
That bright in virgin ether bask;
Because, though free of the outer court
I am, this Temple keeps its shrine
Sacred to Heaven; because in short,
She's not and never can be mine.

From *TO THE UNKNOWN EROS*

(1877)

SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY

Well dost thou, Love, thy solemn Feast to hold
In vestal February;
Not rather choosing out some rosy day
From the rich coronet of the coming May,
When all things meet to marry!
O, quick, praevernal Power
That signall'st punctual through the sleepy mould
The Snowdrop's time to flower,
Fair as the rash oath of virginity
Which is first-love's first cry;
O, Baby Spring,
That flutter'st sudden 'neath the breast of Earth
A month before the birth;
Whence is the peaceful poignancy,
The joy contrite,
Sadder than sorrow, sweeter than delight,
That burthens now the breath of everything,
Though each one sighs as if to each alone
The cherish'd pang were known?
At dusk of dawn, on his dark spray apart,
With it the Blackbird breaks the young Day's heart;
In evening's hush
About it talks the heavenly-minded Thrush;
The hill with like remorse
Smiles to the Sun's smile in his westering course;
The fisher's drooping skiff
In yonder sheltering bay;
The choughs that call about the shining cliff;
The children, noisy in the setting ray;
Own the sweet season, each thing as it may;
Thoughts of strange kindness and forgotten peace
In me increase;
And tears arise
Within my happy, happy Mistress' eyes,
And, lo, her lips, averted from my kiss,
Ask from Love's bounty, ah, much more than bliss!
Is't the sequester'd and exceeding sweet
Of dear Desire electing his defeat?
Is't the waked Earth now to yon purpling cope
Uttering first-love's first cry,
Vainly renouncing, with a Seraph's sigh,
Love's natural hope?
Fair-meaning Earth, foredoom'd to perjury!
Behold, all amorous May,
With roses heap'd upon her laughing brows,
Avoids thee of thy vows!
Were it for thee, with her warm bosom near,
To abide the sharpness of the Seraph's sphere?
Forget thy foolish words;
Go to her summons gay,
Thy heart with dead, wing'd Innocencies fill'd,
Ev'n as a nest with birds
After the old ones by the hawk are kill'd.
Well dost thou, Love, to celebrate
The noon of thy soft ecstasy,
Or e'er it be too late,
Or e'er the Snowdrop die!

THE AZALEA

There, where the sun shines first
Against our room,
She train'd the gold Azalea, whose perfume
She, Spring-like, from her breathing grace dispersed.
Last night the delicate crests of saffron bloom,
For this their dainty likeness watch'd and nurst,
Were just at point to burst.
At dawn I dream'd, O God, that she was dead,
And groan'd aloud upon my wretched bed,
And waked, ah, God, and did not waken her,

But lay, with eyes still closed,
Perfectly bless'd in the delicious sphere
By which I knew so well that she was near,
My heart to speechless thankfulness composed.
Till 'gan to stir
A dizzy somewhat in my troubled head—
It *was* the azalea's breath, and she *was* dead!
The warm night had the lingering buds disclosed,
And I had fall'n asleep with to my breast
A chance-found letter press'd
In which she said,
"So, till to-morrow eve, my Own, adieu!
Parting's well-paid with soon again to meet,
Soon in your arms to feel so small and sweet,
Sweet to myself that am so sweet to you!"

DEPARTURE

It was not like your great and gracious ways!
Do you, that have nought other to lament,
Never, my Love, repent
Of how, that July afternoon,
You went,
With sudden, unintelligible phrase,
And frighten'd eye,
Upon your journey of so many days,
Without a single kiss, or a good-bye?
I knew, indeed, that you were parting soon;
And so we sate, within the low sun's rays,
You whispering to me, for your voice was weak,
Your harrowing praise.
Well, it was well,
To hear you such things speak,
And I could tell
What made your eyes a growing gloom of love,
As a warm South-wind sombres a March grove.
And it was like your great and gracious ways
To turn your talk on daily things, my Dear,
Lifting the luminous, pathetic lash
To let the laughter flash,
Whilst I drew near,
Because you spoke so low that I could scarcely hear.
But all at once to leave me at the last,
More at the wonder than the loss aghast,
With huddled, unintelligible phrase,
And frighten'd eye,
And go your journey of all days
With not one kiss, or a good-bye,
And the only loveless look the look with which you pass'd:
'Twas all unlike your great and gracious ways.

THE TOYS

My little Son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes
And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,
Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,
I struck him, and dismiss'd
With hard words and unkiss'd,
His Mother, who was patient, being dead.
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,
I visited his bed,
But found him slumbering deep,
With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet.
And I, with moan,
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own;
For, on a table drawn beside his head,
He had put, within his reach,
A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone,
A piece of glass abraded by the beach
And six or seven shells,
A bottle with bluebells
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,
To comfort his sad heart.
So when that night I pray'd
To God, I wept, and said:
Ah, when at last we lie with trancèd breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood,
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,
"I will be sorry for their childishness."

MAGNA EST VERITAS

Here, in this little Bay,
Full of tumultuous life and great repose,

Where, twice a day,
The purposeless, glad ocean comes and goes,
Under high cliffs, and far from the huge town,
I sit me down.
For want of me the world's course will not fail:
When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;
The truth is great, and shall prevail
When none cares whether it prevail or not.

IF I WERE DEAD

"If I were dead, you'd sometimes say, Poor child!"
The dear lips quiver'd as they spake,
And the tears brake
From eyes which, not to grieve me, brightly smiled.
Poor Child, poor Child!
I seem to hear your laugh, your talk, your song.
It is not true that Love will do no wrong.
Poor Child!
And did you think, when you so cried and smiled,
How I, in lonely nights, should lie awake,
And of those words your full avengers make?
Poor Child, poor Child!
And now, unless it be
That sweet amends thrice told are come to thee,
O God, have Thou *no* mercy upon me!
Poor Child!

THE CONTRACT

Twice thirty centuries and more ago,
All in a heavenly Abyssinian vale,
Man first met woman; and the ruddy snow
On many-ridgèd Abora turn'd pale,
And the song choked within the nightingale.
A mild white furnace in the thorough blast
Of purest spirit seem'd She as she pass'd;
And of the Man enough that this be said,
He look'd her Head.
Towards their bower
Together as they went,
With hearts conceiving torrents of content,
And linger'd prologue fit for Paradise,
He, gathering power
From dear persuasion of the dim-lit hour,
And doubted sanction of her sparkling eyes,
Thus supplicates her conjugal assent,
And thus she makes replies:
"Lo, Eve, the Day burns on the snowy height,
But here is mellow night!"
"Here let us rest. The languor of the light
Is in my feet.
It is thy strength, my Love, that makes me weak;
Thy strength it is that makes my weakness sweet.
What would thy kiss'd lips speak?"
"See, what a world of roses I have spread
To make the bridal bed.
Come, Beauty's self and Love's, thus to thy throne be led!"
"My Lord, my Wisdom, nay!
Does not yon love-delighted Planet run,
(Haply against her heart,)
A space apart
For ever from her strong-persuading Sun!
O say,
Shall we no voluntary bars
Set to our drift? I, Sister of the Stars,
And Thou, my glorious, course-compelling Day!"
"Yea, yea!
Was it an echo of her coming word
Which, ere she spake, I heard?
Or through what strange distrust was I, her Head,
Not first this thing to have said?
Alway
Speaks not within my breast
The uncompulsive, great and sweet behest
Of something bright,
Not named, not known, and yet more manifest
Than is the morn,
The sun being just at point then to be born?
O Eve, take back thy 'Nay.'
Trust me, Belovèd, ever in all to mean
Thy blissful service, sacrificial keen;
But bondless be that service, and let speak—"
"This other world of roses in my cheek,
Which hide them in thy breast, and deepening seek
That thou decree if they mean Yea or Nay."
"Did e'er so sweet a word such sweet gainsay!"
"And when I lean, Love, on you thus, and smile

So that my Nay seems Yea,
You must the while
Thence be confirm'd that I deny you still!"
"I will, I will!"
"And when my arms are round your neck, like this,
And I, as now,
Melt like a golden ingot in your kiss,
Then, more than ever, shall your splendid word
Be as Archangel Michael's severing sword!
Speak, speak!
Your might, Love, makes me weak,
Your might it is that makes my weakness sweet!"
"I vow, I vow!"
"And are you happy, O, my Hero and Lord;
And is your joy complete?"
"Yea, with my joyful heart my body rocks,
And joy comes down from Heaven in floods and shocks,
As from Mount Abora comes the avalanche."
"My Law, my Light!
Then am I yours as your high mind may list.
No wile shall lure you, none can I resist!"
Thus the first Eve
With much enamour'd Adam did enact
Their mutual free contract
Of virgin spousals, blissful beyond flight
Of modern thought, with great intention staunch,
Though unobliged until that binding pact.
Whether She kept her word, or He the mind
To hold her, wavering, to his own restraint,
Answer, ye pleasures faint,
Ye fiery throes, and upturn'd eyeballs blind
Of sick-at heart Mankind,
Whom nothing succor can,
Until a heaven-caress'd and happier Eve
Be join'd with some glad Saint
In like espousals, blessed upon Earth,
And she her Fruit forth bring;
No numb, chill-hearted, shaken-witted thing,
"Plaining his little span,"
But of proud virgin joy the appropriate birth,
The Son of God and Man.

SPONSA DEI

What is this Maiden fair,
The laughing of whose eye
Is in man's heart renew'd virginity;
Who yet sick longing breeds
For marriage which exceeds
The inventive guess of Love to satisfy
With hope of utter binding, and of loosing endless dear despair?
What gleams about her shine,
More transient than delight and more divine!
If she does something but a little sweet,
As gaze towards the glass to set her hair,
See how his soul falls humbled at her feet!
Her gentle step, to go or come,
Gains her more merit than a martyrdom;
And, if she dance, it doth such grace confer
As opes the heaven of heavens to more than her,
And makes a rival of her worshipper.
To die unknown for her were little cost!
So is she without guile,
Her mere refusèd smile
Makes up the sum of that which may be lost!
Who is this Fair
Whom each hath seen,
The darkest once in this bewailèd dell,
Be he not destin'd for the glooms of hell?
Whom each hath seen
And known, with sharp remorse and sweet, as Queen
And tear-glad Mistress of his hopes of bliss,
Too fair for man to kiss?
Who is this only happy She,
Whom, by a frantic flight of courtesy,
Born of despair
Of better lodging for his Spirit fair,
He adores as Margaret, Maude, or Cecily?
And what this sigh,
That each one heaves for Earth's last lowlihead
And the Heaven high
Ineffably lock'd in dateless bridal-bed?
Are all, then, mad, or is it prophecy?
"Sons now we are of God," as we have heard,
"But what we shall be hath not yet appeared."
O, Heart, remember thee,
That Man is none,
Save One.
What if this Lady be thy Soul, and He
Who claims to enjoy her sacred beauty be,
Not thou, but God; and thy sick fire
A female vanity,

Such as a Bride, viewing her mirror'd charms,
Feels when she sighs, "All these are for his arms!"
A reflex heat
Flash'd on thy cheek from His immense desire,
Which waits to crown, beyond thy brain's conceit,
Thy nameless, secret, hopeless longing sweet,
Not by-and-by, but now,
Unless deny Him thou!

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI (1828–1882)

DANTE AT VERONA

(1870)

Yea, thou shalt learn how salt his food who fares
Upon another's bread,—how steep his path
Who treadeth up and down another's stairs.
(*Div. Com. Parad. xvii.*)
Behold, even I, even I am Beatrice.
(*Div. Com. Purg. xxx.*)

Of Florence and of Beatrice
Servant and singer from of old,
O'er Dante's heart in youth had toll'd
The knell that gave his Lady peace;
And now in manhood flew the dart
Wherewith his City pierced his heart.

Yet if his Lady's home above
Was Heaven, on earth she filled his soul;
And if his City held control
To cast the body forth to rove,
The soul could soar from earth's vain throng,
And Heaven and Hell fulfil the song.

Follow his feet's appointed way;—
But little light we find that clears
The darkness of the exiled years.
Follow his spirit's journey:—nay,
What fires are blent, what winds are blown
On paths his feet may tread alone?

Yet of the twofold life he led
In chainless thought and fettered will
Some glimpses reach us,—somewhat still
Of the steep stairs and bitter bread,—
Of the soul's quest whose stern avow
For years had made him haggard now.

Alas! the Sacred Song whereto
Both heaven and earth had set their hand
Not only at Fame's gate did stand
Knocking to claim the passage through,
But toiled to ope that heavier door
Which Florence shut for evermore.

Shall not his birth's baptismal Town
One last high presage yet fulfil,
And at that font in Florence still
His forehead take the laurel-crown?
O God! or shall dead souls deny
The undying soul its prophecy?

Aye, 'tis their hour. Not yet forgot
The bitter words he spoke that day
When for some great charge far away
Her rulers his acceptance sought.
"And if I go, who stays?"—so rose
His scorn:—"and if I stay, who goes?"

"Lo! thou art gone now, and we stay"
(The curled lips mutter): "and no star
Is from thy mortal path so far
As streets where childhood knew the way.
To Heaven and Hell thy feet may win,
But thine own house they come not in.

Therefore, the loftier rose the song
To touch the secret things of God,
The deeper pierced the hate that trod
On base men's track who wrought the wrong;
Till the soul's effluence came to be
Its own exceeding agony.

Arriving only to depart,
From court to court, from land to land,
Like flame within the naked hand
His body bore his burning heart
That still on Florence strove to bring
God's fire for burnt offering.

Even such was Dante's mood, when now,
Mocked for long years with Fortune's sport
He dwelt at yet another court,
There where Verona's knee did bow
And her voice hailed with all acclaim
Can Grande della Scala's name.

As that lord's kingly guest awhile
His life we follow; through the days
Which walked in exile's barren ways,—
The nights which still beneath one smile
Heard through all spheres one song increase,—
"Even I, even I am Beatrice."

At Can La Scala's court, no doubt,
Due reverence did his steps attend;
The ushers on his path would bend
At ingoing as at going out;
The penmen waited on his call
At council-board, the grooms in hall.

And pages hushed their laughter down,
And gay squires stilled the merry stir,
When he passed up the dais-chamber
With set brows lordlier than a frown;
And tire-maids hidden among these
Drew close their loosened bodices.

Perhaps the priests, (exact to span
All God's circumference,) if at whiles
They found him wandering in their aisles,
Grudged ghostly greeting to the man
By whom, though not of ghostly guild,
With Heaven and Hell men's hearts were fill'd.

And the court-poets (he, forsooth,
A whole world's poet strayed to court!)
Had for his scorn their hate's retort.
He'd meet them flushed with easy youth,
Hot on their errands. Like noon-flies
They vexed him in the ears and eyes.

But at this court, peace still must wrench
Her chaplet from the teeth of war:
By day they held high watch afar,
At night they cried across the trench;
And still, in Dante's path, the fierce
Gaunt soldiers wrangled o'er their spears.

But vain seemed all the strength to him,
As golden convoys sunk at sea
Whose wealth might root out penury;
Because it was not, limb with limb,
Knit like his heart-strings round the wall
Of Florence, that ill pride might fall.

Yet in the tiltyard, when the dust
Cleared from the sundered press of knights
Ere yet again it swoops and smites,
He almost deemed his longing must
Find force to wield that multitude
And hurl that strength the way he would.

How should he move them,—fame and gain
On all hands calling them at strife?
He still might find but his one life
To give, by Florence counted vain:
One heart the false hearts made her doubt,
One voice she heard once and cast out.

Oh! if his Florence could but come,
A lily-sceptred damsel fair,
As her own Giotto painted her
On many shields and gates at home,—
A lady crowned, at a soft pace
Riding the lists round to the dais:

Till where Can Grande rules the lists,
As young as Truth, as calm as Force,
She draws her rein now, while her horse
Bows at the turn of the white wrists;
And when each knight within his stall
Gives ear, she speaks and tells them all:

All the foul tale,—truth sworn untrue
And falsehood's triumph. All the tale?
Great God! and must she not prevail
To fire them ere they heard it through,—
And hand achieve ere heart could rest
That high adventure of her quest?

How would his Florence lead them forth,
Her bridle ringing as she went;
And at the last within her tent,
'Neath golden lilies worship-worth,
How queenly would she bend the while
And thank the victors with her smile!

Also her lips should turn his way
And murmur: "O thou tried and true,
With whom I wept the long years through!
What shall it profit if I say,
Thee I remember? Nay, through thee
All ages shall remember me."

Peace, Dante, peace! The task is long,
The time wears short to compass it.
Within thine heart such hopes may flit
And find a voice in deathless song:
But lo! as children of man's earth,
Those hopes are dead before their birth.

Fame tells us that Verona's court
Was a fair place. The feet might still
Wander forever at their will
In many ways of sweet resort;
And still in many a heart around
The Poet's name due honor found.

Watch we his steps. He comes upon
The women at their palm-playing.
The conduits round the gardens sing
And meet in scoops of milk-white stone,
Where wearied damsels rest and hold
Their hands in the wet spurt of gold.

One of whom, knowing well that he,
By some found stern, was mild with them,
Would run and pluck his garment's hem,
Saying, "Messer Dante, pardon me,"—
Praying that they might hear the song
Which first of all he made, when young,

"Donne che avete" [1] . . . Thereunto
Thus would he murmur, having first
Drawn near the fountain, while she nurs'd
His hand against her side: a few
Sweet words, and scarcely those, half said:
Then turned, and changed, and bowed his head.

For then the voice said in his heart,
"Even I, even I am Beatrice";
And his whole life would yearn to cease:
Till having reached his room, apart
Beyond vast lengths of palace-floor,
He drew the arras round his door.

At such times, Dante, thou hast set
Thy forehead to the painted pane
Full oft, I know; and if the rain
Smote it outside, her fingers met
Thy brow; and if the sun fell there,
Her breath was on thy face and hair.

Then, weeping, I think certainly
Thou hast beheld, past sight of eyne,—
Within another room of thine
Where now thy body may not be
But where in thought thou still remain'st,—
A window often wept against:

The window thou, a youth, hast sought,
Flushed in the limpid eventime,
Ending with daylight the day's rhyme
Of her; where oftenwhiles her thought
Held thee—the lamp untrimmed to write—
In joy through the blue lapse of night.

At Can La Scala's court, no doubt,
Guests seldom wept. It was brave sport,
No doubt, at Can La Scala's court,
Within the palace and without;
Where music, set to madrigals,
Loitered all day through groves and halls.

Because Can Grande of his life
Had not had six-and-twenty years
As yet. And when the chroniclers
Tell you of that Vicenza strife
And of strifes elsewhere,—you must not
Conceive for church-sooth he had got

Just nothing in his wits but war:
Though doubtless 'twas the young man's joy
(Grown with his growth from a mere boy,)
To mark his "Viva Cane!" scare
The foe's shut front, till it would reel
All blind with shaken points of steel.

But there were places—held too sweet
For eyes that had not the due veil
Of lashes and clear lids—as well
In favor as his saddle-seat:
Breath of low speech he scorned not there
Nor light cool fingers in his hair.

Yet if the child whom the sire's plan
Made free of a deep treasure-chest
Scoffed it with ill-conditioned jest,—
We may be sure too that the man
Was not mere thews, nor all content
With lewdness swathed in sentiment.

So you may read and marvel not
That such a man as Dante—one
Who, while Can Grande's deeds were done,
Had drawn his robe round him and thought—
Now at the same guest-table far'd
Where keen Uguccio wiped his beard.[2]

Through leaves and trellis-work the sun
Left the wine cool within the glass,—
They feasting where no sun could pass:
And when the women, all as one,
Rose up with brightened cheeks to go,
It was a comely thing, we know.

But Dante recked not of the wine;
Whether the women stayed or went,
His visage held one stern intent:
And when the music had its sign
To breathe upon them for more ease,
Sometimes he turned and bade it cease.

And as he spared not to rebuke
The mirth, so oft in council he
To bitter truth bore testimony:
And when the crafty balance shook

1 Donne che avete intelletto d'amore:—first canzone of the Vita Nuova.

2 Uguccione della Faggiuola, Dante's former protector, and now his fellow-guest at Verona.

Well poised to make the wrong prevail,
Then Dante's hand would turn the scale.

And if some envoy from afar
Sailed to Verona's sovereign port
For aid or peace, and all the court
Fawned on its lord, "the Mars of war,
Sole arbiter of life and death,"—
Be sure that Dante saved his breath.

And Can La Scala marked askance
These things, accepting them for shame
And scorn, till Dante's guestship came
To be a peevish sufferance:
His host sought ways to make his days
Hateful; and such have many ways.

There was a jester, a foul lout
Whom the court loved for graceless arts;
Sworn scholiast of the bestial parts
Of speech; a ribald mouth to shout
In Folly's horny tympanum
Such things as make the wise man dumb.

Much loved, him Dante loathed. And so,
One day when Dante felt perplex'd
If any day that could come next
Were worth the waiting for or no,
And mute he sat amid their din,—
Can Grande called the Jester in.

Rank words, with such, are wit's best wealth.
Lords mouthed approval; ladies kept
Twittering with clustered heads, except
Some few that took their trains by stealth
And went. Can Grande shook his hair
And smote his thighs and laughed i' the air.

Then, facing on his guest, he cried,—
"Say, Messer Dante, how it is
I get out of a clown like this
More than your wisdom can provide."
And Dante: "'Tis man's ancient whim
That still his like seems good to him."

Also a tale is told, how once,
At clearing tables after meat,
Piled for a jest at Dante's feet
Were found the dinner's well-picked bones;
So laid, to please the banquet's lord,
By one who crouched beneath the board.

Then smiled Can Grande to the rest:—
"Our Dante's tuneful mouth indeed
Lacks not the gift on flesh to feed!"
"Fair host of mine," replied the guest,
"So many bones you'd not descry
If so it chanced the *dog*[1] were I."

But whereforth should we turn the grout
In a drained cup, or be at strife
From the worn garment of a life
To rip the twisted ravel out?
Good needs expounding; but of ill
Each hath enough to guess his fill.

They named him Justicer-at-law:
Each month to bear the tale in mind
Of hues a wench might wear unfin'd
And of the load an ox might draw;
To cavil in the weight of bread
And to see purse-thieves gibbeted.

And when his spirit wove the spell
(From under even to over-noon
In converse with itself alone,)
As high as Heaven, as low as Hell,—
He would be summoned and must go:
For had not Gian stabbed Giacomo?

Therefore the bread he had to eat
Seemed brackish, less like corn than tares;
And the rush-strown accustomed stairs
Each day were steeper to his feet;
And when the night-vigil was done,
His brows would ache to feel the sun.

Nevertheless, when from his kin
There came the tidings how at last
In Florence a decree was pass'd
Whereby all banished folk might win
Free pardon, so a fine were paid
And act of public penance made,—

This Dante writ in answer thus,
Words such as these: "That clearly they
In Florence must not have to say,—
The man abode aloof from us
Nigh fifteen years, yet lastly skulk'd
Hither to candleshrift and mulct.

"That he was one the Heavens forbid
To traffic in God's justice sold
By market-weight of earthly gold,
Or to bow down over the lid
Of steaming censers, and so be
Made clean of manhood's obloquy.

"That since no gate led, by God's will,
To Florence, but the one whereat
The priests and money-changers sat,
He still would wander; for that still,

[1] *Cane*, is the Italian word for *dog*.

Even through the body's prison-bars,
His soul possessed the sun and stars."

Such were his words. It is indeed
For ever well our singers should
Utter good words and know them good
Not through song only; with close heed
Lest, having spent for the work's sake
Six days, the man be left to make.

Months o'er Verona, till the feast
Was come for Florence the Free Town:
And at the shrine of Baptist John
The exiles, girt with many a priest
And carrying candles as they went,
Were held to mercy of the saint.

On the high seats in sober state,—
Gold neck-chains range o'er range below
Gold screen-work where the lilies grow,—
The heads of the Republic sate,
Marking the humbled face go by
Each one of his house-enemy.

And as each proscript rose and stood
From kneeling in the ashen dust
On the shrine-steps some magnate thrust
A beard into the velvet hood
Of his front colleague's gown, to see
The cinders stuck in his bare knee.

Tosinghi passed, Manelli passed,
Rinucci passed, each in his place;
But not an Alighieri's face
Went by that day from first to last
In the Republic's triumph; nor
A foot came home to Dante's door.

(Respublica—a public thing:
A shameful shameless prostitute,
Whose lust with one lord may not suit,
So takes by turn its revelling
A night with each, till each at morn
Is stripped and beaten forth forlorn,

And leaves her, cursing her. If she,
Indeed, have not some spice-draught, hid
In scent under a silver lid,
To drench his open throat with—he
Once hard asleep; and thrust him not
At dawn beneath the stairs to rot.

Such *this* Republic!—not the Maid
He yearned for; she who yet should stand
With Heaven's accepted hand in hand,
Invulnerable and unbetray'd:
To whom, even as to God, should be
Obeisance one with Liberty.)

Years filled out their twelve moons, and ceased
One in another; and alway
There were the whole twelve hours each day
And each night as the years increased;
And rising moon and setting sun
Beheld that Dante's work was done.

What of his work for Florence? Well
It was, he knew, and well must be.
Yet evermore her hate's decree
Dwelt in his thought intolerable:—
His body to be burned,[1]—his soul
To beat its wings at hope's vain goal.

What of his work for Beatrice?
Now well-nigh was the third song writ,—
The stars a third time sealing it
With sudden music of pure peace:
For echoing thrice the threefold song,
The unnumbered stars the tone prolong.[2]

Each hour, as then the Vision pass'd,
He heard the utter harmony
Of the nine trembling spheres, till she
Bowed her eyes towards him in the last,
So that all ended with her eyes,
Hell, Purgatory, Paradise.

"It is my trust, as the years fall,
To write more worthily of her
Who now, being made God's minister,
Looks on His visage and knows all."
Such was the hope that love dar'd blend
With grief's slow fires, to make an end

Of the "New Life," his youth's dear book:
Adding thereunto: "In such trust
I labor, and believe I must
Accomplish this which my soul took
In charge, if God, my Lord and hers,
Leave my life with me a few years."

The trust which he had borne in youth
Was all at length accomplished. He

1 The final sentence passed by Florence against Dante.

2 The last word of each of the three parts of Dante's *Divine Comedy* is *stelle*, stars.
E quindi uscimmo a riveder le *stelle*.—Inferno.
Puro e disposto a salire alle *stelle*.—Purgatorio.
L'amor che muove il sole e l'altre *stelle*.—Paradiso.

At length had written worthily—
Yea even of her; no rhymes uncouth
'Twixt tongue and tongue; but by God's aid
The first words Italy had said.

Ah! haply now the heavenly guide
Was not the last form seen by him:
But there that Beatrice stood slim
And bowed in passing at his side,
For whom in youth his heart made moan
Then when the city sat alone.[1]

Clearly herself: the same whom he
Met, not past girlhood, in the street,
Low-bosomed and with hidden feet;
And then as woman perfectly,
In years that followed, many an once,—
And now at last among the suns

In that high vision. But indeed
It may be memory might recall
Last to him then the first of all,—
The child his boyhood bore in heed
Nine years. At length the voice brought peace,—
"Even I, even I am Beatrice."

All this, being there, we had not seen.
Seen only was the shadow wrought
On the strong features bound in thought;
The vagueness gaining gait and mien;
The white streaks gathering clear to view
In the burnt beard the women knew.

For a tale tells that on his track,
As through Verona's streets he went,
This saying certain women sent:—
"Lo, he that strolls to Hell and back
At will! Behold him, how Hell's reek
Has crisped his beard and singed his cheek."

"Whereat" (Boccaccio's words) "he smil'd
For pride in fame." It might be so:
Nevertheless we cannot know
If haply he were not beguil'd
To bitter mirth, who scarce could tell
If he indeed were back from Hell.

So the day came, after a space,
When Dante felt assured that there
The sunshine must lie sicklier
Even than in any other place,
Save only Florence. When that day
Had come, he rose and went his way.

He went and turned not. From his shoes
It may be that he shook the dust,
As every righteous dealer must
Once and again ere life can close:
And unaccomplished destiny
Struck cold his forehead, it may be.

No book keeps record how the Prince
Sunned himself out of Dante's reach,
Nor how the Jester stank in speech:
While courtiers, used to cringe and wince,
Poets and harlots, all the throng,
Let loose their scandal and their song.

No book keeps record if the seat
Which Dante held at his host's board
Were sat in next by clerk or lord,—
If leman lolled with dainty feet
At ease, or hostage brooded there,
Or priest lacked silence for his prayer.

Eat and wash hands, Can Grande;—scarce
We know their deeds now: hands which fed
Our Dante with that bitter bread;
And thou the watch-dog of those stairs
Which of all paths his feet knew well,
Were steeper found than Heaven or Hell.

[1] *Quomodo sedet sola civitas!*—words quoted by Dante in the Vita Nuova when speaking of Beatrice's death.

MY SISTER'S SLEEP

(*1847*–1850[2]–1870)

She fell asleep on Christmas Eve:
At length the long-ungranted shade
Of weary eyelids overweigh'd
The pain nought else might yet relieve.

Our mother, who had leaned all day
Over the bed from chime to chime,
Then raised herself for the first time,
And as she sat her down, did pray.

Her little work-table was spread
With work to finish. For the glare
Made by her candle, she had care
To work some distance from the bed.

Without, there was a cold moon up,
Of winter radiance sheer and thin;

[2] In *The Germ.*

The hollow halo it was in
Was like an icy crystal cup.

Through the small room, with subtle sound
Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove
And reddened. In its dim alcove
The mirror shed a clearness round.

I had been sitting up some nights,
And my tired mind felt weak and blank;
Like a sharp strengthening wine it drank
The stillness and the broken lights.

Twelve struck. That sound, by dwindling years
Heard in each hour, crept off; and then
The ruffled silence spread again,
Like water that a pebble stirs.

Our mother rose from where she sat:
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled: no other noise than that.

"Glory unto the Newly Born!"
So, as said angels, she did say;
Because we were in Christmas Day,
Though it would still be long till morn.

Just then in the room over us
There was a pushing back of chairs,
As some who had sat unawares
So late, now heard the hour, and rose.

With anxious softly-stepping haste
Our mother went where Margaret lay,
Fearing the sounds o'erhead—should they
Have broken her long watched-for rest!

She stooped an instant, calm, and turned;
But suddenly turned back again;
And all her features seemed in pain
With woe, and her eyes gazed and yearned.

For my part, I but hid my face,
And held my breath, and spoke no word:
There was none spoken; but I heard
The silence for a little space.

Our mother bowed herself and wept:
And both my arms fell, and I said,
"God knows I knew that she was dead."
And there, all white, my sister slept.

Then kneeling, upon Christmas morn
A little after twelve o'clock
We said, ere the first quarter struck,
"Christ's blessing on the newly born!"

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

(*1847*–1850[1]–1870)

The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
. . . Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face. . . .
Nothing: the autumn fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is Space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remembered names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

1 In *The Germ.*

And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be harkened? When those bells
Possessed the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

"I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come," she said.
"Have I not prayed in Heaven?—on earth,
Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?

"When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God's sight.

"We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayers sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

"We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

"And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know."

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

"We two," she said, "will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys.

"Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

"He shall fear, haply, and be dumb;
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

"Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aureoles:
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:—
Only to live as once on earth
With Love, only to be,
As then awhile, for ever now,
Together, I and he."

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild,—
"All this is when he comes." She ceased.
The light thrilled towards her, fill'd
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smil'd.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres:
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,

And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

THE PORTRAIT

(*1847–1870*)

This is her picture as she was:
It seems a thing to wonder on,
As though mine image in the glass
Should tarry when myself am gone.
I gaze until she seems to stir,—
Until mine eyes almost aver
That now, even now, the sweet lips part
To breathe the words of the sweet heart:—
And yet the earth is over her.

Alas! even such the thin-drawn ray
That makes the prison-depths more rude,—
The drip of water night and day
Giving a tongue to solitude.
Yet only this, of love's whole prize,
Remains; save what in mournful guise
Takes counsel with my soul alone,—
Save what is secret and unknown,
Below the earth, above the skies.

In painting her I shrined her face
'Mid mystic trees, where light falls in
Hardly at all; a covert place
Where you might think to find a din
Of doubtful talk, and a live flame
Wandering, and many a shape whose name
Not itself knoweth, and old dew,
And your own footsteps meeting you,
And all things going as they came.

A deep dim wood: and there she stands
As in that wood that day: for so
Was the still movement of her hands
And such the pure line's gracious flow.
And passing fair the type must seem,
Unknown the presence and the dream.
'T is she: though of herself, alas!
Less than her shadow on the grass
Or than her image in the stream.

That day we met there, I and she
One with the other all alone;
And we were blithe; yet memory
Saddens those hours, as when the moon
Looks upon daylight. And with her
I stooped to drink the spring-water,
Athirst where other waters sprang;
And where the echo is, she sang,—
My soul another echo there.

But when that hour my soul won strength
For words whose silence wastes and kills,
Dull raindrops smote us, and at length
Thundered the heat within the hills.
That eve I spoke those words again
Beside the pelted window-pane;
And there she harkened what I said,
With under-glances that surveyed
The empty pastures blind with rain.

Next day the memories of these things,
Like leaves through which a bird has flown,
Still vibrated with Love's warm wings;
Till I must make them all my own
And paint this picture. So, 'twixt ease
Of talk and sweet long silences,
She stood among the plants in bloom
At windows of a summer room,
To feign the shadow of the trees.

And as I wrought, while all above
And all around was fragrant air,
In the sick burthen of my love
It seemed each sun-thrilled blossom there
Beat like a heart among the leaves.
O heart that never beats nor heaves,
In that one darkness lying still,
What now to thee my love's great will,
Or the fine web the sunshine weaves?

For now doth daylight disavow
Those days,—nought left to see or hear.
Only in solemn whispers now
At night-time these things reach mine ear,
When the leaf-shadows at a breath
Shrink in the road, and all the heath,
Forest and water, far and wide,
In limpid starlight glorified,
Lie like the mystery of death.

Last night at last I could have slept,
And yet delayed my sleep till dawn,
Still wandering. Then it was I wept:
For unawares I came upon
Those glades where once she walked with me:
And as I stood there suddenly,
All wan with traversing the night,
Upon the desolate verge of light
Yearned loud the iron-bosomed sea.

Even so, where Heaven holds breath and hears
The beating heart of Love's own breast,—

Where round the secret of all spheres
All angels lay their wings to rest,—
How shall my soul stand rapt and awed,
When, by the new birth borne abroad
Throughout the music of the suns,
It enters in her soul at once
And knows the silence there for God!

Here with her face doth memory sit
Meanwhile, and wait the day's decline,
Till other eyes shall look from it,
Eyes of the spirit's Palestine,
Even than the old gaze tenderer:
While hopes and aims long lost with her
Stand round her image side by side,
Like tombs of pilgrims that have died
About the Holy Sepulchre.

THE CARD-DEALER

(1870)

Could you not drink her gaze like wine?
Yet though its splendor swoon
Into the silence languidly
As a tune into a tune,
Those eyes unravel the coiled night
And know the stars at noon.

The gold that's heaped beside her hand,
In truth rich prize it were;
And rich the dreams that wreathe her brows
With magic stillness there;
And he were rich who should unwind
That woven golden hair.

Around her, where she sits, the dance
Now breathes its eager heat;
And not more lightly or more true
Fall there the dancers' feet
Than fall her cards on the bright board
As 'twere an heart that beat.

Her fingers let them softly through,
Smooth polished silent things;
And each one as it falls reflects
In swift light-shadowings,
Blood-red and purple, green and blue,
The great eyes of her rings.

Whom plays she with? With thee, who lov'st
Those gems upon her hand;
With me, who search her secret brows;
With all men, bless'd or bann'd.
We play together, she and we,
Within a vain strange land:
A land without any order,—
Day even as night, (one saith,)—
Where who lieth down ariseth not
Nor the sleeper awakeneth;
A land of darkness as darkness itself
And of the shadow of death.

What be her cards, you ask? Even these:—
The heart, that doth but crave
More, having fed; the diamond,
Skilled to make base seem brave;
The club, for smiting in the dark;
The spade, to dig a grave.

And do you ask what game she plays?
With me 'tis lost or won;
With thee it is playing still; with him
It is not well begun;
But 'tis a game she plays with all
Beneath the sway o' the sun.

Thou seest the card that falls, she knows
The card that followeth:
Her game in thy tongue is called Life,
As ebbs thy daily breath:
When she shall speak, thou'lt learn her tongue
And know she calls it Death.

MARY'S CHILDHOOD

(*For a Picture*)

(*1848*–1849–1870)

I

This is that blessed Mary, pre-elect
God's Virgin. Gone is a great while, and she
Dwelt young in Nazareth of Galilee.
Unto God's will she brought devout respect,
Profound simplicity of intellect,
And supreme patience. From her mother's knee
Faithful and hopeful; wise in charity;
Strong in grave peace; in pity circumspect.
So held she through her girlhood; as it were
An angel-watered lily, that near God
Grows and is quiet. Till, one dawn at home
She woke in her white bed, and had no fear

At all,—yet wept till sunshine, and felt awed:
Because the fulness of the time was come.

II

These are the symbols. On that cloth of red
I' the centre is the Tripoint: perfect each,
Except the second of its points, to teach
That Christ is not yet born. The books —whose head
Is golden Charity, as Paul hath said—
Those virtues are wherein the soul is rich:
Therefore on them the lily standeth, which
Is Innocence, being interpreted.
The seven-thorn'd briar and the palm seven-leaved
Are her great sorrow and her great reward.
Until the end be full, the Holy One
Abides without. She soon shall have achieved
Her perfect purity: yea, God the Lord
Shall soon vouchsafe His Son to be her Son.

THE SEA-LIMITS

(1850–1870)

Consider the sea's listless chime:
  Time's self it is, made audible,—
  The murmur of the earth's own shell.
Secret continuance sublime
  Is the sea's end: our sight may pass
  No furlong further. Since time was
This sound hath told the lapse of time.

No quiet, which is death's,—it hath
  The mournfulness of ancient life,
  Enduring always at dull strife.
As the world's heart of rest and wrath,
  Its painful pulse is in the sands.
  Last utterly, the whole sky stands,
Gray and not known, along its path.

Listen alone beside the sea,
  Listen alone among the woods;
  Those voices of twin solitudes
Shall have one sound alike to thee:
  Hark where the murmurs of thronged men
  Surge and sink back and surge again,
Still the one voice of wave and tree.

Gather a shell from the strown beach
  And listen at its lips: they sigh
  The same desire and mystery,
The echo of the whole sea's speech.
  And all mankind is thus at heart
  Not anything but what thou art:
And Earth, Sea, Man, are all in each.

PENUMBRA

(*1853–1870*)

I did not look upon her eyes,
(Though scarcely seen, with no surprise,
'Mid many eyes a single look,)
Because they should not gaze rebuke,
At night, from stars in sky and brook.

I did not take her by the hand,
(Though little was to understand
From touch of hand all friends might take,)
Because it should not prove a flake
Burnt in my palm to boil and ache.

I did not listen to her voice,
(Though none had noted, where at choice
All might rejoice in listening,)
Because no such a thing should cling
In the wood's moan at evening.

I did not cross her shadow once,
(Though from the hollow west the sun's
Last shadow runs along so far,)
Because in June it should not bar
My ways, at noon when fevers are.

They told me she was sad that day,
(Though wherefore tell what love's soothsay,
Sooner than they, did register?)
And my heart leapt and wept to her,
And yet I did not speak nor stir.

So shall the tongues of the sea's foam
(Though many voices therewith come
From drowned hope's home to cry to me,)
Bewail one hour the more, when sea
And wind are one with memory.

SISTER HELEN

(1854–1870)

"Why did you melt your waxen man,
  Sister Helen?
To-day is the third since you began."
"The time was long, yet the time ran,

Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Three days to-day, between Hell and Heaven!)

"But if you have done your work aright,
Sister Helen,
You'll let me play, for you said I might."
"Be very still in your play to-night,
Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Third night, to-night, between Hell and Heaven!)

"You said it must melt ere vesper-bell,
Sister Helen;
If now it be molten, all is well."
"Even so,—nay, peace! you cannot tell,
Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
O what is this, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh the waxen knave was plump to-day,
Sister Helen;
How like dead folk he has dropped away!"
"Nay now, of the dead what can you say,
Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What of the dead, between Hell and Heaven?)

"See, see, the sunken pile of wood,
Sister Helen,
Shines through the thinned wax red as blood!"
"Nay now, when looked you yet on blood,
Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
How pale she is, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Now close your eyes, for they're sick and sore,
Sister Helen,
And I'll play without the gallery door."
"Aye, let me rest,—I'll lie on the floor,
Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What rest to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Here high up in the balcony,
Sister Helen,
The moon flies face to face with me."
"Aye, look and say whatever you see,
Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What sight to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Outside it's merry in the wind's wake,
Sister Helen;
In the shaken trees the chill stars shake."
"Hush, heard you a horse-tread as you spake,
Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What sound to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"I hear a horse-tread, and I see,
Sister Helen,
Three horsemen that ride terribly."
"Little brother, whence come the three,
Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Whence should they come, between Hell and Heaven?)

"They come by the hill-verge from Boyne Bar,
Sister Helen,
And one draws nigh, but two are afar."
"Look, look, do you know them who they are,
Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Who should they be, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh, it's Keith of Eastholm rides so fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white mane on the blast."
"The hour has come, has come at last,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Her hour at last between Hell and Heaven!)

"He has made a sign and called Halloo!
Sister Helen,
And he says that he would speak with you."
"Oh tell him I fear the frozen dew,
Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Why laughs she thus, between Hell and Heaven!)

"The wind is loud, but I hear him cry,
Sister Helen,
That Keith of Ewern's like to die."
"And he and thou, and thou and I,
Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
And they and we, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Three days ago, on his marriage-morn,
Sister Helen,
He sickened, and lies since then forlorn."
"For bridegroom's side is the bride a thorn,
Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Cold bridal cheer, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Three days and nights he has lain abed,
Sister Helen,
And he prays in torment to be dead."
"The thing may chance, if he have prayed,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
If he have prayed between Hell and Heaven!)

"But he has not ceased to cry to-day,
Sister Helen,
That you should take your curse away."
"My prayer was heard,—he need but pray,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Shall God not hear, between Hell and Heaven?)

"But he says, till you take back your ban,
Sister Helen,
His soul would pass, yet never can."
"Nay then, shall I slay a living man,
Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
A living soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

"But he calls for ever on your name,
Sister Helen,
And says that he melts before a flame."
"My heart for his pleasure fared the same,
Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Fire at the heart, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Here's Keith of Westholm riding fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white plume on the blast."
"The hour, the sweet hour I forecast,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Is the hour sweet, between Hell and Heaven?)

"He stops to speak, and he stills his horse,
Sister Helen;
But his words are drowned in the wind's course."

"Nay hear, nay hear, you must hear perforce,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What word now heard, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh he says that Keith of Ewern's cry,
Sister Helen,
Is ever to see you ere he die."
"In all that his soul sees, there am I,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
The soul's one sight, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He sends a ring and a broken coin,
Sister Helen,
And bids you mind the banks of Boyne."
"What else he broke will he ever join,
Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
No, never joined, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He yields you these and craves full fain,
Sister Helen,
You pardon him in his mortal pain."
"What else he took will he give again,
Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Not twice to give, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He calls your name in an agony,
Sister Helen,
That even dead Love must weep to see."
"Hate, born of Love, is blind as he,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Love turned to hate, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh it's Keith of Keith now that rides fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white hair on the blast."
"The short, short hour will soon be past,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Will soon be past, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He looks at me and he tries to speak,
Sister Helen,
But oh! his voice is sad and weak!"
"What here should the mighty Baron seek,
Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,

Is this the end, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh his son still cries, if you forgive,
Sister Helen,
The body dies, but the soul shall live."
"Fire shall forgive me as I forgive,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
As she forgives, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh he prays you, as his heart would rive,
Sister Helen,
To save his dear son's soul alive."
"Fire cannot slay it, it shall thrive,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Alas, alas, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He cries to you, kneeling in the road,
Sister Helen,
To go with him for the love of God!"
"The way is long to his son's abode,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The way is long, between Hell and Heaven!)

"A lady's here, by a dark steed brought,
Sister Helen,
So darkly clad, I saw her not."
"See her now or never see aught,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What more to see, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Her hood falls back and the moon shines fair,
Sister Helen,
On the Lady of Ewern's golden hair."
"'Blest hour of my power and her despair,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Hour blest and bann'd between Hell and Heaven!)

"Pale, pale her cheeks, that in pride did glow,
Sister Helen,
'Neath the bridal-wreath three days ago.
"One morn for pride and three days for woe,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Three days, three nights, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Her clasped hands stretch from her bending head,
Sister Helen;
With the loud wind's wail her sobs are wed."
"What wedding-strains hath her bridal-bed,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What strain but death's, between Hell and Heaven?)

"She may not speak, she sinks in a swoon,
Sister Helen,
She lifts her lips and gasps on the moon."
"Oh! might I but hear her soul's blithe tune,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Her woe's dumb cry, between Hell and Heaven!)

"They've caught her to Westholm's saddle-bow,
Sister Helen,
And her moonlit hair gleams white in its flow."
"Let it turn whiter than winter snow,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Woe-withered gold, between Hell and Heaven!)

"O Sister Helen, you heard the bell,
Sister Helen!
More loud than the vesper-chime it fell."
"No vesper-chime, but a dying knell,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Alas! but I fear the heavy sound,
Sister Helen;
Is it in the sky or in the ground?"
"Say, have they turned their horses round,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What would she more, between Hell and Heaven?)

"They have raised the old man from his knee,
Sister Helen,
And they ride in silence hastily."
"More fast the naked soul doth flee,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The naked soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Flank to flank are the three steeds gone,
Sister Helen,
But the lady's dark steed goes alone."
"And lonely her bridegroom's soul hath flown,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The lonely ghost, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh the wind is sad in the iron chill,
Sister Helen,
And weary sad they look by the hill."
"But he and I are sadder still,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Most sad of all, between Hell and Heaven!)

"See, see, the wax has dropped from its place,
Sister Helen,
And the flames are winning up apace!"
"Yet here they burn but for a space,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Here for a space, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Ah! what white thing at the door has cross'd,
Sister Helen?
Ah! what is this that sighs in the frost?"
"A soul that's lost as mine is lost,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven!)

THE BURDEN OF NINEVEH

(1856–1870)

In our Museum galleries
To-day I lingered o'er the prize
Dead Greece vouchsafes to living eyes,—
Her Art for ever in fresh wise
From hour to hour rejoicing me.
Sighing I turned at last to win
Once more the London dirt and din;
And as I made the swing-door spin
And issued, they were hoisting in
A wingèd beast from Nineveh.

A human face the creature wore,
And hoofs behind and hoofs before,
And flanks with dark runes fretted o'er.
'T was bull, 'twas mitred Minotaur,
A dead disbowelled mystery;
The mummy of a buried faith
Stark from the charnel without scathe,
Its wings stood for the light to bathe,—
Such fossil cerements as might swathe
The very corpse of Nineveh.

The print of its first rush-wrapping,
Wound ere it dried, still ribbed the thing.
What song did the brown maidens sing,
From purple mouths alternating,
When that was woven languidly?
What vows, what rites, what prayers preferr'd,
What songs has the strange image heard?
In what blind vigil stood interr'd
For ages, till an English word
Broke silence first at Nineveh?

Oh when upon each sculptured court,
Where even the wind might not resort,—
O'er which Time passed, of like import
With the wild Arab boys at sport,—
A living face looked in to see:—
Oh seemed it not—the spell once broke—
As though the carven warriors woke,
As though the shaft the string forsook,
The cymbals clashed, the chariots shook,
And there was life in Nineveh?

On London stones our sun anew
The beast's recovered shadow threw.
(No shade that plague of darkness knew,
No light, no shade, while older grew
By ages the old earth and sea.)
Lo thou! could all thy priests have shown
Such proof to make thy godhead known?
From their dead Past thou liv'st alone
And still thy shadow is thine own
Even as of yore in Nineveh.

That day whereof we keep record,
When near thy city-gates the Lord
Sheltered his Jonah with a gourd,
This sun, (I said) here present, pour'd
Even thus this shadow that I see.
This shadow has been shed the same
From sun and moon,—from lamps which came
For prayer,—from fifteen days of flame,
The last, while smouldered to a name
Sardanapalus' Nineveh.

Within thy shadow, haply, once
Sennacherib has knelt, whose sons
Smote him between the altar-stones:
Or pale Semiramis her zones
Of gold, her incense brought to thee,
In love for grace, in war for aid: . . .

Ay, and who else? . . . till 'neath thy shade
Within his trenches newly made
Last year the Christian knelt and pray'd—
Not to thy strength—in Nineveh.

Now, thou poor god, within this hall
Where the blank windows blind the wall
From pedestal to pedestal,
The kind of light shall on thee fall
Which London takes the day to be:
While school-foundations in the act
Of holiday, three files compact,
Shall learn to view thee as a fact
Connected with that zealous tract:
"Rome,—Babylon and Nineveh."

Deemed they of this, those worshippers,
When, in some mythic chain of verse
Which man shall not again rehearse,
The faces of thy ministers
Yearned pale with bitter ecstasy?
Greece, Egypt, Rome,—did any god
Before whose feet men knelt unshod
Deem that in this unblest abode
Another scarce more unknown god
Should house with him, from Nineveh?

Ah! in what quarries lay the stone
From which this pygmy pile has grown,
Unto man's need how long unknown,
Since thy vast temples, court and cone,
Rose far in desert history?
Ah! what is here that does not lie
All strange to thine awakened eye?
Ah! what is here can testify
(Save that dumb presence of the sky)
Unto thy day and Nineveh?

Why, of those mummies in the room
Above, there might indeed have come
One out of Egypt to thy home,
An alien. Nay, but were not some
Of these thine own "antiquity"?
And now,—they and their gods and thou
All relics here together,—now
Whose profit? whether bull or cow,
Isis or Ibis, who or how,
Whether of Thebes or Nineveh?

The consecrated metals found,
And ivory tablets, underground,
Winged teraphim and creatures crown'd
When air and daylight filled the mound,
Fell into dust immediately.
And even as these, the images
Of awe and worship,—even as these,—
So, smitten with the sun's increase,
Her glory mouldered and did cease
From immemorial Nineveh.

The day her builders made their halt,
Those cities of the lake of salt
Stood firmly 'stablished without fault,
Made proud with pillars of basalt,
With sardonyx and porphyry.
The day that Jonah bore abroad
To Nineveh the voice of God,
A brackish lake lay in his road,
Where erst Pride fixed her sure abode,
As then in royal Nineveh.

The day when he, Pride's lord and Man's,
Showed all the kingdoms at a glance
To Him before whose countenance
The years recede, the years advance,
And said, Fall down and worship me:—
'Mid all the pomp beneath that look,
Then stirred there, haply, some rebuke,
Where to the wind the salt pools shook,
And in those tracts, of life forsook,
That knew thee not, O Nineveh!

Delicate harlot! On thy throne
Thou with a world beneath thee prone
In state for ages sat'st alone;
And needs were years and lustres flown
Ere strength of man could vanquish thee:
Whom even thy victor foes must bring,
Still royal, among maids that sing
As with doves' voices, taboring
Upon their breasts, unto the King,—
A kingly conquest, Nineveh!

. . . Here woke my thought. The wind's slow sway
Had waxed; and like the human play
Of scorn that smiling spreads away,
The sunshine shivered off the day:
The callous wind, it seemed to me,
Swept up the shadow from the ground:
And pale as whom the Fates astound,
The god forlorn stood winged and crown'd;
Within I knew the cry lay bound
Of the dumb soul of Nineveh.

And as I turned, my sense half shut
Still saw the crowds of kerb and rut
Go past as marshalled to the strut
Of ranks in gypsum quaintly cut.
It seemed in one same pageantry
They followed forms which had been erst;
To pass, till on my sight should burst
That future of the best or worst
When some may question which was first,
Of London or of Nineveh.

For as that Bull-god once did stand
And watched the burial-clouds of sand,
Till these at last without a hand
Rose o'er his eyes, another land,
And blinded him with destiny:—
So may he stand again; till now,
In ships of unknown sail and prow,
Some tribe of the Australian plough
Bear him afar,—a relic now
Of London, not of Nineveh!

Or it may chance indeed that when
Man's age is hoary among men,—
His centuries threescore and ten,—
His furthest childhood shall seem then
More clear than later times may be:
Who, finding in this desert place
This form, shall hold us for some race
That walked not in Christ's lowly ways,
But bowed its pride and vowed its praise
Unto the god of Nineveh.

The smile rose first,—anon drew nigh
The thought: . . . Those heavy wings spread high
So sure of flight, which do not fly;
That set gaze never on the sky;
Those scriptured flanks it cannot see;
Its crown, a brow-contracting load;
Its planted feet which trust the sod: . . .
(So grew the image as I trod:)
O Nineveh, was this thy God,—
Thine also, mighty Nineveh?

LOVE'S NOCTURN

(1870)

Master of the murmuring courts
Where the shapes of sleep convene!—
Lo! my spirit here exhorts
All the powers of thy demesne
For their aid to woo my queen.
What reports
Yield thy jealous courts unseen?

Vaporous, unaccountable,
Dreamland lies forlorn of light,
Hollow like a breathing shell.
Ah! that from all dreams I might
Choose one dream and guide its flight!
I know well
What her sleep should tell to-night.

There the dreams are multitudes:
Some that will not wait for sleep,
Deep within the August woods;
Some that hum while rest may steep
Weary labor laid a-heap;
Interludes,
Some, of grievous moods that weep.

Poet's fancies all are there:
There the elf-girls flood with wings
Valleys full of plaintive air;
There breathe perfumes; there in rings
Whirl the foam-bewildered springs;
Siren there
Winds her dizzy hair and sings.

Thence the one dream mutually
Dreamed in bridal unison,
Less than waking ecstasy;
Half-formed visions that make moan
In the house of birth alone;
And what we,
At death's wicket, see, unknown.

But for mine own sleep, it lies
In one gracious form's control,
Fair with honorable eyes,
Lamps of a translucent soul;
O their glance is loftiest dole,
Sweet and wise,
Wherein Love descries his goal.

Reft of her, my dreams are all
Clammy trance that fears the sky:
Changing footpaths shift and fall;
From polluted coverts nigh,
Miserable phantoms sigh:
Quakes the pall,
And the funeral goes by.

Master, is it soothly said
That, as echoes of man's speech
Far in secret clefts are made,
So do all men's bodies reach
Shadows o'er thy sunken beach,—
Shape or shade
In those halls portrayed of each?

Ah! might I, by thy good grace
Groping in the windy stair,
(Darkness and the breath of space,
Like loud waters everywhere),
Meeting mine own image there
Face to face,
Send it from that place to her!

Nay, not I; but oh! do thou,
Master, from thy shadow kind
Call my body's phantom now:
Bid it bear its face declin'd
Till its flight her slumbers find,
And her brow
Feel its presence bow like wind.

Where in groves the gracile Spring
  Trembles, with mute orison
Confidently strengthening,
  Water's voice and wind's as one
  Shed an echo in the sun.
    Soft as Spring,
  Master, bid it sing and moan.

Song shall tell how glad and strong
  Is the night she soothes alway;
Moan shall grieve with that parched tongue
  Of the brazen hours of day:
  Sounds as of the springtide they,
    Moan and song,
  While the chill months long for May.

Not the prayers which with all leave
  The world's fluent woes prefer,—
Not the praise the world doth give,
  Dulcet fulsome whisperer;—
  Let it yield my love to her,
    And achieve
  Strength that shall not grieve or err.

Wheresoe'er my dreams befall,
  Both at night-watch (let it say),
And where round the sun-dial
  The reluctant hours of day,
  Heartless, hopeless of their way,
    Rest and call;
  There her glance doth fall and stay.

Suddenly her face is there;
  So do mounting vapors wreathe
Subtle-scented transports where
  The black fir-wood sets its teeth.
  Part the boughs and look beneath,—
    Lilies share
  Secret waters there, and breathe.

Master, bid my shadow bend
  Whispering thus till birth of light,
Lest new shapes that sleep may send
  Scatter all its work to flight;—
  Master, master of the night,
    Bid it spend
  Speech, song, prayer, and end aright.

Yet, ah me! if at her head
  There another phantom lean
Murmuring o'er the fragrant bed,—
  Ah! and if my spirit's queen
  Smile those alien words between,—
    Ah, poor shade!
  Shall it strive, or fade unseen?

How should love's own messenger
  Strive with love and be love's foe?
Master, nay! If thus, in her,
  Sleep a wedded heart should show,—
  Silent let mine image go,
    Its old share
  Of thy spell-bound air to know.

Like a vapor wan and mute,
  Like a flame, so let it pass;
One low sigh across her lute,
  One dull breath against her glass;
  And to my sad soul, alas!
    One salute
  Cold as when death's foot shall pass.

Then, too, let all hopes of mine,
  All vain hopes by night and day,
Slowly at thy summoning sign
  Rise up pallid and obey.
  Dreams, if this is thus, were they:—
    Be they thine,
  And to dream world pine away.

Yet from old time, life, not death,
  Master, in thy rule is rife:
Lo! through thee, with mingling breath,
  Adam woke beside his wife.
  O Love bring me so, for strife,
    Force and faith,
  Bring me so not death but life!

Yea, to Love himself is pour'd
  This frail song of hope and fear.
Thou art Love, of one accord
  With kind Sleep to bring her near,
  Still-eyed, deep-eyed, ah how dear!
    Master, Lord,
  In her name implor'd, O hear!

FIRST LOVE REMEMBERED

(1870)

Peace in her chamber, wheresoe'er
  It be, a holy place:
  The thought still brings my soul such grace
As morning meadows wear.

Whether it still be small and light,
  A maid's who dreams alone,
  As from her orchard-gate the moon
Its ceiling showed at night:

Or whether, in a shadow dense
  As nuptial hymns invoke,
  Innocent maidenhood awoke
To married innocence:

There still the thanks unheard await
  The unconscious gift bequeathed;

For there my soul this hour has breathed
An air inviolate.

PLIGHTED PROMISE

(1870)

In a soft-complexioned sky,
Fleeting rose and kindling gray,
Have you seen Aurora fly
At the break of day?
So my maiden, so my plighted may
Blushing cheek and gleaming eye
Lifts to look my way.

Where the inmost leaf is stirred
With the heart-beat of the grove,
Have you heard a hidden bird
Cast her note above?
So my lady, so my lovely love,
Echoing Cupid's prompted word,
Makes a tune thereof.

Have you seen, at heaven's mid-height,
In the moon-rack's ebb and tide,
Venus leap forth burning white,
Dian pale and hide?
So my bright breast-jewel, so my bride,
One sweet night, when fear takes flight,
Shall leap against my side.

THE WOODSPURGE

(1870)

The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walked on at the wind's will,—
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,—
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me,
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

EDEN BOWER

(1870)

It was Lilith the wife of Adam:
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Not a drop of her blood was human,
But she was made like a soft sweet woman.

Lilith stood on the skirts of Eden;
(*Alas the hour!*)
She was the first that thence was driven;
With her was hell and with Eve was heaven.

In the ear of the Snake said Lilith:—
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
"To thee I come when the rest is over;
A snake was I when thou wast my lover.

"I was the fairest snake in Eden:
(*Alas the hour!*)
By the earth's will, new form and feature
Made me a wife for the earth's new creature.

"Take me thou as I come from Adam:
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Once again shall my love subdue thee;
The past is past and I am come to thee.

"O but Adam was thrall to Lilith!
(*Alas the hour!*)
All the threads of my hair are golden,
And there in a net his heart was holden.

"O and Lilith was queen of Adam!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
All the day and the night together
My breath could shake his soul like a feather.

"What great joys had Adam and Lilith!—
(*Alas the hour!*)
Sweet close rings of the serpent's twining,
As heart in heart lay sighing and pining.

"What bright babes had Lilith and Adam!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Shapes that coiled in the woods and waters,
Glittering sons and radiant daughters.

"O thou God, the Lord God of Eden!
(*Alas the hour!*)
Say, was this fair body for no man,
That of Adam's flesh thou mak'st him a woman?

"O thou Snake, the King-snake of Eden!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
God's strong will our necks are under,
But thou and I may cleave it in sunder.

"Help, sweet Snake, sweet lover of Lilith!
(*Alas the hour!*)
And let God learn how I loved and hated
Man in the image of God created.

"Help me once against Eve and Adam!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Help me once for this one endeavor,
And then my love shall be thine forever!

"Strong is God, the fell foe of Lilith:
(*Alas the hour!*)
Nought in heaven or earth may affright Him;
But join thou with me and we will smite Him.

"Strong is God, the great God of Eden:
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Over all He made He hath power;
But lend me thou thy shape for an hour!

"Lend thy shape for the love of Lilith!
(*Alas the hour!*)
Look, my mouth and my cheek are ruddy,
And thou art cold, and fire is my body.

"Lend thy shape for the hate of Adam!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
That he may wail my joy that forsook him,
And curse the day when the bride-sleep took him.

"Lend thy shape for the shame of Eden!
(*Alas the hour!*)
Is not the foe-God weak as the foeman
When love grows hate in the heart of a woman?

"Wouldst thou know the heart's hope of Lilith?
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Then bring thou close thine head till it glisten
Along my breast, and lip me and listen.

"Am I sweet, O sweet Snake of Eden?
(*Alas the hour!*)
Then ope thine ear to my warm mouth's cooing
And learn what deed remains for our doing.

"Thou didst hear when God said to Adam:—
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
'Of all this wealth I have made thee warden;
Thou'rt free to eat of the trees of the garden:

"'Only of one tree eat not in Eden;
(*Alas the hour!*)
All save one I give to thy freewill,—
The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.'

"O my love, come nearer to Lilith!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
In thy sweet folds bind me and bend me.
And let me feel the shape thou shalt lend me.

"In thy shape I'll go back to Eden;
(*Alas the hour!*)
In these coils that Tree will I grapple,
And stretch this crowned head forth by the apple.

"Lo, Eve bends to the breath of Lilith!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
O how then shall my heart desire
All her blood as food to its fire!

"Lo, Eve bends to the words of Lilith!—
(*Alas the hour!*)
'Nay, this Tree's fruit,—why should ye hate it,
Or Death be born the day that ye ate it?

"'Nay, but on that great day in Eden,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
By the help that in this wise Tree is,
God knows well ye shall be as He is.'

"Then Eve shall eat and give unto Adam;
(*Alas the hour!*)
And then they both shall know they are naked,
And their hearts ache as my heart hath achèd.

"Ay, let them hide 'mid the trees of Eden,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
As in the cool of the day in the garden
God shall walk without pity or pardon.

"Hear, thou Eve, the man's heart in Adam!
(*Alas the hour!*)
Of his brave words hark to the bravest:—
'This the woman gave that thou gavest.'

"Hear Eve speak, yea list to her, Lilith!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Feast thine heart with words that shall sate it—
'This the serpent gave and I ate it.'

"O proud Eve, cling close to thine Adam,
(*Alas the hour!*)
Driven forth as the beasts of his naming
By the sword that forever is flaming.

"Know, thy path is known unto Lilith!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
While the blithe birds sang at thy wedding,
There her tears grew thorns for thy treading.

"O my love, thou Love-snake of Eden!
(*Alas the hour!*)
O to-day and the day to come after!
Loose me, love,—give breath to my laughter.

"O bright Snake, the Death-worm of Adam!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Wreathe thy neck with my hair's bright tether,
And wear my gold and thy gold together!

"On that day on the skirts of Eden,
(*Alas the hour!*)
In thy shape shall I glide back to thee,
And in my shape for an instant view thee.

"But when thou'rt thou and Lilith is Lilith,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
In what bliss past hearing or seeing
Shall each one drink of the other's being!

"With cries of 'Eve!' and 'Eden!' and 'Adam!'
(*Alas the hour!*)
How shall we mingle our love's caresses,
I in thy coils, and thou in my tresses!

"With those names, ye echoes of Eden,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Fire shall cry from my heart that burneth,—
'Dust he is and to dust returneth!'

"Yet to-day, thou master of Lilith,—
(*Alas the hour!*)
Wrap me round in the form I'll borrow
And let me tell thee of sweet to-morrow.

"In the planted garden eastward in Eden,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Where the river goes forth to water the garden,
The springs shall dry and the soil shall harden.

"Yea, where the bride-sleep fell upon Adam,
(*Alas the hour!*)
None shall hear when the storm-wind whistles
Through roses choked among thorns and thistles.

"Yea, beside the east-gate of Eden,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Where God joined them and none might sever,
The sword turns this way and that forever.

"What of Adam cast out of Eden?
(*Alas the hour!*)
Lo! with care like a shadow shaken,
He tills the hard earth whence he was taken.

"What of Eve too, cast out of Eden?
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Nay, but she, the bride of God's giving,
Must yet be mother of all men living.

"Lo, God's grace, by the grace of Lilith!
(*Alas the hour!*)
To Eve's womb, from our sweet to-morrow,
God shall greatly multiply sorrow.

"Fold me fast, O God-snake of Eden!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
What more prize than love to impel thee?
Grip and lip my limbs as I tell thee!

"Lo! two babes for Eve and for Adam!
(*Alas the hour!*)
Lo! sweet Snake, the travail and treasure,—
Two men-children born for their pleasure!

"The first is Cain and the second Abel:
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
The soul of one shall be made thy brother,
And thy tongue shall lap the blood of the other."
(*Alas the hour!*)

TROY TOWN

(1870)

Heavenborn Helen, Sparta's queen,
(O Troy Town!)
Had two breasts of heavenly sheen,
The sun and moon of the heart's desire:
All Love's lordship lay between.
(O Troy's down!
Tall Troy's on fire.)

Helen knelt at Venus' shrine,
(O Troy Town!)
Saying "A little gift is mine,
A little gift for a heart's desire.
Hear me speak and make me a sign!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Look, I bring thee a carven cup;
(O Troy Town!)
See it here as I hold it up,—
Shaped it is to the heart's desire,
Fit to fill when the gods would sup.
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"It was moulded like my breast;
(O Troy Town!)
He that sees it may not rest,
Rest at all for his heart's desire.
O give ear to my heart's behest!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

See my breast, how like it is;
(O Troy Town!)
See it bare for the air to kiss!
Is the cup to thy heart's desire?
O for the breast, O make it his!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Yea, for my bosom here I sue:
(O Troy Town!)
Thou must give it where 't is due,
Give it there to the heart's desire.
Whom do I give my bosom to?
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Each twin breast is an apple sweet!
(O Troy Town!)
Once an apple stirred the beat
Of thy heart with the heart's desire:
Say, who brought it then to thy feet?
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"They that claimed it then were three:
(O Troy Town!)
For thy sake two hearts did he
Make forlorn of the heart's desire.
Do for him as he did for thee!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Mine are apples grown to the south,
(O Troy Town!)
Grown to taste in the days of drouth,
Taste and waste to the heart's desire:
Mine are apples meet for his mouth!"
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Venus looked on Helen's gift,
(O Troy Town!)
Looked and smiled with subtle drift,
Saw the work of her heart's desire:—
"There thou kneel'st for Love to lift!"
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Venus looked in Helen's face,
(O Troy Town!)
Knew far off an hour and place,
And fire lit from the heart's desire;
Laughed and said, "Thy gift hath grace!"
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Cupid looked on Helen's breast,
(O Troy Town!)
Saw the heart within its nest,
Saw the flame of the heart's desire,—
Marked his arrow's burning crest.
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Cupid took another dart,
(O Troy Town!)
Fledged it for another heart,
Winged the shaft with the heart's desire,
Drew the string and said, "Depart!"
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Paris turned upon his bed,
(O Troy Town!)
Turned upon his bed and said,
Dead at heart with the heart's desire,—
"O to clasp her golden head!"
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

LOVE-LILY

(1870)

Between the hands, between the brows,
  Between the lips of Love-Lily,
A spirit is born whose birth endows
  My blood with fire to burn through me;
Who breathes upon my gazing eyes,
  Who laughs and murmurs in mine ear,
At whose least touch my color flies,
  And whom my life grows faint to hear.

Within the voice, within the heart,
  Within the mind of Love-Lily,
A spirit is born who lifts apart
  His tremulous wings and looks at me;
Who on my mouth his finger lays,
  And shows, while whispering lutes confer,
That Eden of Love's watered ways
  Whose winds and spirits worship her.

Brows, hands, and lips, heart, mind, and voice,
  Kisses and words of Love-Lily,—
Oh! bid me with your joy rejoice
  Till riotous longing rest in me!
Ah! let not hope be still distraught,
  But find in her its gracious goal,
Whose speech Truth knows not from her thought
  Nor Love her body from her soul.

THREE SHADOWS

(*1876*–1881)

I looked and saw your eyes
  In the shadow of your hair,
As a traveller sees the stream
  In the shadow of the wood;
And I said, "My faint heart sighs,
  Ah me! to linger there,
To drink deep and to dream
  In that sweet solitude."

I looked and saw your heart
  In the shadow of your eyes,
As a seeker sees the gold
  In the shadow of the stream;
And I said, "Ah me! what art
  Should win the immortal prize,
Whose want must make life cold
  And Heaven a hollow dream?"

I looked and saw your love
  In the shadow of your heart,
As a diver sees the pearl
  In the shadow of the sea;
And I murmured, not above
  My breath, but all apart,—
"Ah! you can love, true girl,
  And is your love for me?"

THE CLOUD CONFINES

(1872)

The day is dark and the night
  To him that would search their heart;
  No lips of cloud that will part
Nor morning song in the light:
  Only, gazing alone,
  To him wild shadows are shown,
  Deep under deep unknown
And height above unknown height.
    Still we say as we go,—
      "Strange to think by the way,
    Whatever there is to know,
      That shall we know one day."

The Past is over and fled;
  Named new, we name it the old;
  Thereof some tale hath been told,
But no word comes from the dead;
  Whether at all they be,
  Or whether as bond or free,
  Or whether they too were we,
Or by what spell they have sped.
    Still we say as we go,—
      "Strange to think by the way,
    Whatever there is to know,
      That shall we know one day."

What of the heart of hate
  That beats in thy breast, O Time?—
  Red strife from the furthest prime,
And anguish of fierce debate;
  War that shatters her slain,
  And peace that grinds them as grain,
  And eyes fixed ever in vain
On the pitiless eyes of Fate.
    Still we say as we go,—
      "Strange to think by the way,
    Whatever there is to know,
      That shall we know one day."

What of the heart of love
  That bleeds in thy breast, O man?—
  Thy kisses snatched 'neath the ban
Of fangs that mock them above;
  Thy bells prolonged unto knells,
  Thy hope that a breath dispels,
  Thy bitter forlorn farewells
And the empty echoes thereof?

Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

The sky leans dumb on the sea,
Aweary with all its wings;
And oh! the song the sea sings
Is dark everlastingly.
Our past is clean forgot,
Our present is and is not,
Our future's a sealed seedplot,
And what betwixt them are we?—
We who say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

From *THE HOUSE OF LIFE*

THE SONNET

(1881)

A Sonnet is a moment's monument,—
Memorial from the Soul's eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.
A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The Soul,—its converse, to what Power 'tis due:—
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.

PART I. YOUTH AND CHANGE

I. LOVE ENTHRONED

(1881)

I marked all kindred Powers the heart finds fair:—
Truth, with awed lips; and Hope, with eyes upcast;
And Fame, whose loud wings fan the ashen Past
To signal-fires, Oblivion's flight to scare;
And Youth, with still some single golden hair
Unto his shoulder clinging, since the last
Embrace wherein two sweet arms held him fast;
And Life, still wreathing flowers for Death to wear.
Love's throne was not with these; but far above
All passionate wind of welcome and farewell
He sat in breathless bowers they dream not of;
Though Truth foreknow Love's heart, and Hope foretell,
And Fame be for Love's sake desirable,
And Youth be dear, and life be sweet to Love.

II. BRIDAL BIRTH

(1870)

As when desire, long darkling, dawns, and first
The mother looks upon the new-born child,
Even so my Lady stood at gaze and smiled
When her soul knew at length the Love it nurs'd.
Born with her life, creature of poignant thirst
And exquisite hunger, at her heart Love lay
Quickening in darkness, till a voice that day
Cried on him, and the bonds of birth were burst.
Now, shadowed by his wings, our faces yearn
Together, as his fullgrown feet now range
The grove, and his warm hands our couch prepare:
Till to his song our bodiless souls in turn
Be born his children, when Death's nuptial change
Leaves us for light the halo of his hair.

III. LOVE'S TESTAMENT

(1870)

O thou who at Love's hour ecstatically
Unto my heart dost ever more present,
Clothed with his fire, thy heart his testament;
Whom I have neared and felt thy breath to be
The inmost incense of his sanctuary;
Who without speech hast owned him, and intent

Upon his will, thy life with mine hast blent,
And murmured, "I am thine, thou 'rt one with me!"
O what from thee the grace, to me the prize,
And what to Love the glory,—when the whole
Of the deep stair thou tread'st to the dim shoal
And weary water of the place of sighs,
And there dost work deliverance, as thine eyes
Draw up my prisoned spirit to thy soul!

IV. LOVESIGHT

(1870)

When do I see thee most, belovèd one?
When in the light the spirits of mine eyes
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize
The worship of that Love through thee made known?
Or when in the dusk hours, (we two alone,)
Close-kissed and eloquent of still replies
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?
O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

V. HEART'S HOPE

(1881)

By what word's power, the key of paths untrod,
Shall I the difficult deeps of Love explore,
Till parted waves of Song yield up the shore
Even as that sea which Israel crossed dry-shod?
For lo! in some poor rhythmic period,
Lady, I fain would tell how evermore
Thy soul I know not from thy body, nor
Thee from myself, neither our love from God.
Yea, in God's name, and Love, and thine, would I
Draw from one loving heart such evidence
As to all hearts all things shall signify;
Tender as dawn's first hill-fire, and intense
As instantaneous penetrating sense,
In Spring's birth-hour, of other Springs gone by.

VII. SUPREME SURRENDER

(1870)

To all the spirits of Love that wander by
Along his love-sown harvest-field of sleep
My lady lies apparent; and the deep
Calls to the deep; and no man sees but I.
The bliss so long afar, at length so nigh,
Rests there attained. Methinks proud Love must weep
When Fate's control doth from his harvest reap
The sacred hour for which the years did sigh.
First touched, the hand now warm around my neck
Taught memory long to mock desire: and lo!
Across my breast the abandoned hair doth flow,
Where one shorn tress long stirred the longing ache:
And next the heart that trembled for its sake
Lies the queen-heart in sovereign overthrow.

IX. PASSION AND WORSHIP

(1870)

One flame-winged brought a white-winged harp-player
Even where my lady and I lay all alone;
Saying: "Behold, this minstrel is unknown;
Bid him depart, for I am minstrel here:
Only my strains are to Love's dear ones dear."
Then said I: "Through thine hautboy's rapturous tone
Unto my lady still this harp makes moan,
And still she deems the cadence deep and clear."
Then said my lady: "Thou art Passion of Love,

And this Love's Worship: both he plights to me.
Thy mastering music walks the sunlit sea:
But where wan water trembles in the grove
And the wan moon is all the light thereof,
This harp still makes my name its voluntary."

X. THE PORTRAIT

(1870)

O Lord of all compassionate control,
O Love! let this my lady's picture glow
Under my hand to praise her name, and show
Even of her inner self the perfect whole:
That he who seeks her beauty's furthest goal,
Beyond the light that the sweet glances throw
And refluent wave of the sweet smile, may know
The very sky and sea-line of her soul.
Lo! it is done. Above the enthroning throat
The mouth's mould testifies of voice and kiss,
The shadowed eyes remember and foresee.
Her face is made her shrine. Let all men note
That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this!)
They that would look on her must come to me.

XI. THE LOVE-LETTER

(1870)

Warned by her hand and shadowed by her hair
As close she leaned and poured her heart through thee,
Whereof the articulate throbs accompany
The smooth black stream that makes thy whiteness fair,—
Sweet fluttering sheet, even of her breath aware,—
Oh let thy silent song disclose to me
That soul wherewith her lips and eyes agree
Like married music in Love's answering air.

Fain had I watched her when, at some fond thought,
Her bosom to the writing closelier press'd,
And her breast's secrets peered into her breast;
When, through eyes raised an instant, her soul sought
My soul, and from the sudden confluence caught
The words that made her love the loveliest.

XIII. YOUTH'S ANTIPHONY

(1881)

"I love you, sweet: how can you ever learn
How much I love you?" "You I love even so,
And so I learn it." "Sweet, you cannot know
How fair you are." "If fair enough to earn
Your love, so much is all my love's concern."
"My love grows hourly, sweet." "Mine too doth grow,
Yet love seemed full so many hours ago!"
Thus lovers speak, till kisses claim their turn.
Ah! happy they to whom such words as these
In youth have served for speech the whole day long,
Hour after hour, remote from the world's throng,
Work, contest, fame, all life's confederate pleas,—
What while Love breathed in sighs and silences
Through two blent souls one rapturous undersong.

XV. THE BIRTH-BOND

(1870)

Have you not noted, in some family
Where two were born of a first marriage-bed,
How still they own their gracious bond, though fed
And nursed on the forgotten breast and knee?—
How to their father's children they shall be
In act and thought of one goodwill; but each

Shall for the other have, in silence speech,
And in a word complete community?
Even so, when first I saw you, seemed it, love,
That among souls allied to mine was yet
One nearer kindred than life hinted of.
O born with me somewhere that men forget,
And though in years of sight and sound unmet,
Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough!

XVIII. GENIUS IN BEAUTY

(1881)

Beauty like hers is genius. Not the call
Of Homer's or of Dante's heart sublime,—
Not Michael's hand furrowing the zones of time,—
Is more with compassed mysteries musical;
Nay, not in Spring's or Summer's sweet footfall
More gathered gifts exuberant Life bequeathes
Than doth this sovereign face, whose love-spell breathes
Even from its shadowed contour on the wall.
As many men are poets in their youth,
But for one sweet-strung soul the wires prolong
Even through all change the indomitable song;
So in like wise the envenomed years, whose tooth
Rends shallower grace with ruin void of ruth,
Upon this beauty's power shall wreak no wrong.

XIX. SILENT NOON

(1881)

Your hands lie open in the long, fresh grass,—
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn hedge.
'T is visible silence, still as the hour-glass.
Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky,—
So this wing'd hour is dropped to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of love.

XXIV. PRIDE OF YOUTH

(1881)

Even as a child, of sorrow that we give
The dead, but little in his heart can find,
Since without need of thought to his clear mind
Their turn it is to die and his to live:—
Even so the winged New Love smiles to receive
Along his eddying plumes the auroral wind,
Nor, forward glorying, casts one look behind
Where night-rack shrouds the Old Love fugitive.
There is a change in every hour's recall,
And the last cowslip in the fields we see
On the same day with the first corn-poppy.
Alas for hourly change! Alas for all
The loves that from his hand proud Youth lets fall,
Even as the beads of a told rosary!

XXVII. HEART'S COMPASS

(1881)

Sometimes thou seem'st not as thyself alone,
But as the meaning of all things that are;
A breathless wonder, shadowing forth afar
Some heavenly solstice hushed and halcyon;
Whose unstirred lips are music's visible tone;
Whose eyes the sun-gate of the soul unbar,
Being of its furthest fires oracular—
The evident heart of all life sown and mown.

Even such love is; and is not thy name Love?
Yea, by thy hand the Love-god rends apart
All gathering clouds of Night's ambiguous art;
Flings them far down, and sets thine eyes above;
And simply, as some gage of flower or glove,
Stakes with a smile the world against thy heart.

XXXII. EQUAL TROTH

(1881)

Not by one measure mayst thou mete our love;
For how should I be loved as I love thee?—
I, graceless, joyless, lacking absolutely
All gifts that with thy queenship best behove;—
Thou, throned in every heart's elect alcove,
And crowned with garlands culled from every tree,
Which for no head but thine, by Love's decree,
All beauties and all mysteries interwove.
But here thine eyes and lips yield soft rebuke:—
"Then only," (say'st thou) "could I love thee less,
When thou couldst doubt my love's equality."
Peace, sweet! If not to sum but worth we look,
Thy heart's transcendence, not my heart's excess,—
Then more a thousandfold thou lov'st than I.

XL. SEVERED SELVES

(1881)

Two separate divided silences,
Which brought together, would find loving voice;
Two glances which together would rejoice
In love, now lost like stars beyond dark trees;
Two hands apart whose touch alone gives ease;
Two bosoms which, heart-shrined with mutual flame,
Would, meeting in one clasp, be made the same;
Two souls, the shores wave-mocked of sundering seas:—
Such are we now. Ah! may our hope forecast
Indeed one hour again, when on this stream
Of darkened love once more the light shall stream
An hour how slow to come, how quickly past,—
Which blooms and fades, and only leaves at last,
Faint as shed flowers, the attenuated dream.

XLI. THROUGH DEATH TO LOVE

(1881)

Like labor-laden mooncloud faint to flee
From winds that sweep the winter-bitten wold,—
Like multiform circumfluence manifold
Of night's flood-tide,—like terrors that agree
Of hoarse-tongued fire and inarticulate sea,—
Even such, within some glass dimmed by our breath,
Our hearts discern wild images of Death,
Shadows and shoals that edge eternity.
Howbeit athwart Death's imminent shade doth soar
One Power, than flow of stream or flight of dove
Sweeter to glide around, to brood above.
Tell me, my heart,—what angel-greeted door
Or threshold of wing-winnowed threshing-floor
Hath guest fire-fledged as thine, whose lord is Love?

XLIII. LOVE AND HOPE

(1881)

Bless love and hope. Full many a withered year
Whirled past us, eddying to its chill doomsday;
And clasped together where the blown leaves lay
We long have knelt and wept full many a tear.
Yet lo! one hour at last, the Spring's compeer,

Flutes softly to us from some green by-way:
Those years, those tears are dead, but only they:—
Bless love and hope, true soul; for we are here.
Cling heart to heart; nor of this hour demand
Whether in very truth, when we are dead,
Our hearts shall wake to know Love's golden head
Sole sunshine of the imperishable land;
Or but discern, through night's unfeatured scope,
Scorn-fired at length the illusive eyes of Hope.

XLVIII. DEATH-IN-LOVE

(1870)

There came an image in Life's retinue
That had Love's wings and bore his gonfalon:
Fair was the web, and nobly wrought thereon,
O soul-sequestered face, thy form and hue!
Bewildering sounds, such as Spring wakens to,
Shook in its folds; and through my heart its power
Sped trackless as the immemorable hour
When birth's dark portal groaned and all was new.
But a veiled woman followed, and she caught
The banner round its staff, to furl and cling,—
Then plucked a feather from the bearer's wing,
And held it to his lips that stirred it not,
And said to me, "Behold, there is no breath:
I and this Love are one, and I am Death."

XLIX. WILLOWWOOD—I

(1869[1]–1870)

I sat with Love upon a woodside well,
Leaning across the water, I and he;
Nor ever did he speak nor looked at me,
But touched his lute wherein was audible
The certain secret thing he had to tell:
Only our mirrored eyes met silently
In the low wave; and that sound came to be
The passionate voice I knew; and my tears fell.
And at their fall, his eyes beneath grew hers;
And with his foot and with his wing-feathers
He swept the spring that watered my heart's drouth.
Then the dark ripples spread to waving hair,
And as I stooped, her own lips rising there
Bubbled with brimming kisses at my mouth.

1 In *The Fortnightly Club.*

L. WILLOWWOOD—II

(1869–1870)

And now Love sang: but his was such a song,
So meshed with half-remembrance hard to free,
As souls disused in death's sterility
May sing when the new birthday tarries long.
And I was made aware of a dumb throng
That stood aloof, one form by every tree,
All mournful forms, for each was I or she,
The shades of those our days that had no tongue.
They looked on us, and knew us and were known;
While fast together, alive from the abyss,
Clung the soul-wrung implacable close kiss;
And pity of self through all made broken moan
Which said, "For once, for once, for once alone!"
And still Love sang, and what he sang was this:—

LI. WILLOWWOOD—III

(1869–1870)

"O ye, all ye that walk in Willowwood,
That walk with hollow faces burning white;
What fathom-depth of soul-struck widowhood,
What long, what longer hours, one life-long night,
Ere ye again, who so in vain have wooed

Your last hope lost, who so in vain invite
Your lips to that their unforgotten food,
Ere ye, ere ye again shall see the light!
Alas! the bitter banks in Willowwood,
With tear-spurge wan, with blood-wort burning red:
Alas! if ever such a pillow could
Steep deep the soul in sleep till she were dead,—
Better all life forget her than this thing,
That Willowwood should hold her wandering!"

LII. WILLOWWOOD—IV

(1869–1870)

So sang he: and as meeting rose and rose
Together cling through the wind's well-away
Nor change at once, yet near the end of day
The leaves drop loosened where the heart-stain glows,—
So when the song died did the kiss unclose;
And her face fell back drowned, and was as gray
As its gray eyes; and if it ever may
Meet mine again I know not if Love knows.
Only I know that I leaned low and drank
A long draught from the water where she sank,
Her breath and all her tears and all her soul:
And as I leaned, I know I felt Love's face
Pressed on my neck with moan of pity and grace,
Till both our heads were in his aureole.

LIII. WITHOUT HER

(1881)

What of her glass without her? The blank gray
There where the pool is blind of the moon's face.
Her dress without her? The tossed empty space
Of cloud-rack whence the moon has passed away.
Her paths without her? Day's appointed sway
Usurped by desolate night. Her pillowed place
Without her? Tears, ah me! for love's good grace,
And cold forgetfulness of night or day.

What of the heart without her? Nay, poor heart,
Of thee what word remains ere speech be still?
A wayfarer by barren ways and chill,
Steep ways and weary, without her thou art,
Where the long cloud, the long wood's counterpart,
Sheds doubled darkness up the laboring hill.

LVI. TRUE WOMAN—I. HERSELF

(1881)

To be a sweetness more desired than Spring;
A bodily beauty more acceptable
Than the wild rose-tree's arch that crowns the fell;
To be an essence more environing
Than wine's drained juice; a music ravishing
More than the passionate pulse of Philomel;—
To be all this 'neath one soft bosom's swell
That is the flower of life:—how strange a thing!
How strange a thing to be what Man can know
But as a sacred secret! Heaven's own screen
Hides her soul's purest depth and loveliest glow;
Closely withheld, as all things most unseen,—
The wave-bowered pearl,—the heart-shaped seal of green
That flecks the snowdrop underneath the snow.

LVII. TRUE WOMAN—II. HER LOVE

(1881)

She loves him; for her infinite soul is Love,
And he her lodestar. Passion in her is
A glass facing his fire, where the bright bliss
Is mirrored, and the heat returned. Yet move
That glass, a stranger's amorous flame to prove,
And it shall turn, by instant contraries,
Ice to the moon; while her pure fire to his

For whom it burns, clings close i' the heart's alcove.
Lo! they are one. With wifely breast to breast
And circling arms, she welcomes all command
Of love,—her soul to answering ardors fann'd:
Yet as morn springs or twilight sinks to rest,
Ah! who shall say she deems not loveliest
The hour of sisterly sweet hand-in-hand?

LVIII. TRUE WOMAN—III. HER HEAVEN

(1881)

If to grow old in Heaven is to grow young,
(As the Seer saw and said,) then blest were he
With youth for evermore, whose heaven should be
True Woman, she whom these weak notes have sung,
Here and hereafter,—choir-strains of her tongue,—
Sky-spaces of her eyes,—sweet signs that flee
About her soul's immediate sanctuary,—
Were Paradise all uttermost worlds among.
The sunrise blooms and withers on the hill
Like any hillflower; and the noblest troth
Dies here to dust. Yet shall Heaven's promise clothe
Even yet those lovers who have cherished still
This test for love:—in every kiss sealed fast
To feel the first kiss and forbode the last.

LIX. LOVE'S LAST GIFT

(1881)

Love to his singer held a glistening leaf,
And said: "The rose-tree and the apple-tree
Have fruits to vaunt or flowers to lure the bee;
And golden shafts are in the feathered sheaf
Of the great harvest-marshal, the year's chief,
Victorious Summer; aye, and 'neath warm sea
Strange secret grasses lurk inviolably
Between the filtering channels of sunk reef.
All are my blooms; and all sweet blooms of love
To thee I gave while Spring and Summer sang;
But Autumn stops to listen, with some pang
From those worse things the wind is moaning of.
Only this laurel dreads no winter days:
Take my last gift; thy heart hath sung my praise."

PART II. CHANGE AND FATE

LX. TRANSFIGURED LIFE

(1881)

As growth of form or momentary glance
In a child's features will recall to mind
The father's with the mother's face combin'd,—
Sweet interchange that memories still enhance:
And yet, as childhood's years and youth's advance,
The gradual mouldings leave one stamp behind,
Till in the blended likeness now we find
A separate man's or woman's countenance:—
So in the Song, the singer's Joy and Pain,
Its very parents, evermore expand
To bid the passion's fullgrown birth remain,
By Art's transfiguring essence subtly spann'd;
And from that song-cloud shaped as a man's hand
There comes the sound as of abundant rain.

LXII. THE SOUL'S SPHERE

(1881)

Some prisoned moon in steep cloud-fastnesses,—
Throned queen and thralled; some dying sun whose pyre
Blazed with momentous memorable fire;—
Who hath not yearned and fed his heart with these?

Who, sleepless, hath not anguished to appease
Tragical shadow's realm of sound and sight
Conjectured in the lamentable night? . . .
Lo! the soul's sphere of infinite images!
What sense shall count them? Whether it forecast
The rose-winged hours that flutter in the van
Of Love's unquestioning unrevealèd span,—
Visions of golden futures: or that last
Wild pageant of the accumulated past
That clangs and flashes for a drowning man.

LXV. KNOWN IN VAIN

(1869–1870)

As two whose love, first foolish, widening scope,
Knows suddenly, to music high and soft,
The Holy of holies; who because they scoff'd
Are now amazed with shame, nor dare to cope
With the whole truth aloud, lest heaven should ope;
Yet, at their meetings, laugh not as they laugh'd
In speech; nor speak, at length; but sitting oft
Together, within hopeless sight of hope
For hours are silent:—So it happeneth
When Work and Will awake too late, to gaze
After their life sailed by, and hold their breath.
Ah! who shall dare to search through what sad maze
Thenceforth their incommunicable ways
Follow the desultory feet of Death?

LXVI. THE HEART OF THE NIGHT

(1869–1870)

From child to youth; from youth to arduous man;
From lethargy to fever of the heart;
From faithful life to dream-dowered days apart:
From trust to doubt; from doubt to brink of ban:—
Thus much of change in one swift cycle ran
Till now. Alas, the soul!—how soon must she
Accept her primal immortality,—
The flesh resume its dust whence it began?
O Lord of work and peace! O Lord of life!
O Lord, the awful Lord of will! though late,
Even yet renew this soul with duteous breath:
That when the peace is garnered in from strife,
The work retrieved, the will regenerate,
This soul may see thy face, O Lord of death!

LXX. THE HILL SUMMIT

(1870)

This feast-day of the sun, his altar there
In the broad west has blazed for vesper-song;
And I have loitered in the vale too long
And gaze now a belated worshipper.
Yet may I not forget that I was ware,
So journeying, of his face at intervals
Transfigured where the fringed horizon falls,—
A fiery bush with coruscating hair.
And now that I have climbed and won this height,
I must tread downward through the sloping shade
And travel the bewildered tracks till night.
Yet for this hour I still may here be stayed
And see the gold air and the silver fade
And the last bird fly into the last light.

LXXI. THE CHOICE—I

(1870)

Eat thou and drink! to-morrow thou shalt die.
Surely the earth, that's wise being very old,
Needs not our help. Then loose me, love, and hold
Thy sultry hair up from my face; that I
May pour for thee this golden wine, brimhigh,
Till round the glass thy fingers glow like gold.

We'll drown all hours: thy song, while hours are toll'd,
Shall leap, as fountains veil the changing sky.
Now kiss, and think that there are really those,
My own high-bosomed beauty, who increase
Vain gold, vain lore, and yet might choose our way!
Through many years they toil; then on a day
They die not,—for their life was death,—but cease;
And round their narrow lips the mould falls close.

LXXII. THE CHOICE—II

(1870)

Watch thou and fear; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Or art thou sure thou shalt have time for death?
Is not the day which God's word promiseth
To come man knows not when? In yonder sky,
Now while we speak, the sun speeds forth: can I
Or thou assure him of his goal? God's breath
Even at this moment haply quickeneth
The air to a flame; till spirits, always nigh
Though screened and hid, shall walk the daylight here.
And dost thou prate of all that man shall do?
Canst thou, who hast but plagues, presume to be
Glad in his gladness that comes after thee?
Will *his* strength slay *thy* worm in Hell? Go to;
Cover thy countenance, and watch, and fear.

LXXIII. THE CHOICE—III

(1870)

Think thou and act; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon the shore,
Thou say'st: "Man's measured path is all gone o'er:
Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh,
Man clomb until he touched the truth; and I,
Even I, am he whom it was destined for."
How should this be? Art thou then so much more
Than they who sowed, that thou shouldst reap thereby?
Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound
Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me;
Then reach on with thy thought till it be drown'd.
Miles and miles distant though the last line be,
And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,—
Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.

LXXVII. SOUL'S BEAUTY

(1870)

(*Sibylla Palmifera*)

Under the arch of Life, where love and death,
Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,
I drew it in as simply as my breath.
Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
The sky and sea bend on thee,—which can draw,
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.
This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
Thy voice and hand shake still;—long known to thee
By flying hair and fluttering hem,—the beat
Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and days!

LXXVIII. BODY'S BEAUTY

(1870)

(*Lilith*)

Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve,)

That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
And, subtly of herself contemplative,
Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.
The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.

LXXXI. MEMORIAL THRESHOLDS

(1881)

What place so strange,—though unrevealèd snow
With unimaginable fires arise
At the earth's end,—what passion of surprise
Like frost-bound fire-girt scenes of long ago?
Lo! this is none but I this hour; and lo!
This is the very place which to mine eyes
Those mortal hours in vain immortalize,
'Mid hurrying crowds, with what alone I know.
City, of thine a single simple door,
By some new Power reduplicate, must be
Even yet my life-porch in eternity,
Even with one presence filled, as once of yore:
Or mocking winds whirl round a chaff-strown floor
Thee and thy years and these my words and me.

LXXXII. HOARDED JOY

(1870)

I said: "Nay, pluck not,—let the first fruit be;
Even as thou sayest, it is sweet and red,
But let it ripen still. The tree's bent head
Sees in the stream its own fecundity
And bides the day of fulness. Shall not we
At the sun's hour that day possess the shade,
And claim our fruit before its ripeness fade,
And eat it from the branch and praise the tree?"
I say: "Alas! our fruit hath wooed the sun
Too long,—'t is fallen and floats adown the stream.
Lo, the last clusters! Pluck them every one,
And let us sup with summer; ere the gleam
Of autumn set the year's pent sorrow free,
And the woods wail like echoes from the sea."

LXXXIII. BARREN SPRING

(1870)

Once more the changed year's turning wheel returns:
And as a girl sails balanced in the wind,
And now before and now again behind
Stoops as it swoops, with cheek that laughs and burns,—
So Spring comes merry towards me here, but earns
No answering smile from me, whose life is twin'd
With the dead boughs that winter still must bind,
And whom to-day the Spring no more concerns.
Behold, this crocus is a withering flame;
This snowdrop, snow; this apple-blossom's part
To breed the fruit that breeds the serpent's art.
Nay, for these Spring-flowers, turn thy face from them,
Nor stay till on the year's last lily-stem
The white cup shrivels round the golden heart.

LXXXVI. LOST DAYS

(1869–1870)

The lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat

Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?
I do not see them here; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
"I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?"
"And I—and I—thyself," (lo! each one saith,)
"And thou thyself to all eternity!"

XC. RETRO ME, SATHANA!

(1870)

Get thee behind me. Even as, heavy-curled,
Stooping against the wind, a charioteer
Is snatched from out his chariot by the hair,
So shall Time be; and as the void car, hurled
Abroad by reinless steeds, even so the world:
Yea, even as chariot-dust upon the air,
It shall be sought and not found anywhere.
Get thee behind me, Satan. Oft unfurled,
Thy perilous wings can beat and break like lath
Much mightiness of men to win thee praise.
Leave these weak feet to tread in narrow ways.
Thou still, upon the broad vine-sheltered path,
Mayst wait the turning of the phials of wrath
For certain years, for certain months and days.

XCIV. MICHELANGELO'S KISS

(1881)

Great Michelangelo, with age grown bleak
And uttermost labors, having once o'er-said
All grievous memories on his long life shed,
This worst regret to one true heart could speak:—
That when, with sorrowing love and reverence meek,
He stooped o'er sweet Colonna's dying bed,
His Muse and dominant Lady, spirit-wed,—
Her hand he kissed, but not her brow or cheek.
O Buonarrotti,—good at Art's fire-wheels
To urge her chariot!—even thus the Soul,
Touching at length some sorely-chastened goal,
Earns oftenest but a little: her appeals
Were deep and mute,—lowly her claim. Let be:
What holds for her Death's garner? And for thee?

XCVII. A SUPERSCRIPTION

(1869–1870)

Look in my face; my name is Might-have-been;
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell;
Unto thine ear I hold the dead-sea shell
Cast up thy Life's foam-fretted feet between;
Unto thine eyes the glass where that is seen
Which had Life's form and Love's, but by my spell
Is now a shaken shadow intolerable,
Of ultimate things unuttered the frail screen.
Mark me, how still I am! But should there dart
One moment through thy soul the soft surprise
Of that winged Peace which lulls the breath of sighs,—
Then shalt thou see me smile, and turn apart
Thy visage to mine ambush at thy heart
Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes.

XCIX. NEWBORN DEATH—I

(1869–1870)

To-day Death seems to me an infant child
Which her worn mother Life upon my knee
Has set to grow my friend and play with me;
If haply so my heart might be beguil'd

To find no terrors in a face so mild,—
If haply so my weary heart might be
Unto the newborn milky eyes of thee,
O Death, before resentment reconcil'd.
How long, O Death? And shall thy feet depart
Still a young child's with mine, or wilt thou stand
Fullgrown the helpful daughter of my heart,
What time with thee indeed I reach the strand
Of the pale wave which knows thee what thou art,
And drink it in the hollow of thy hand?

C. NEWBORN DEATH—II

(1869–1870)

And thou, O Life, the lady of all bliss,
With whom, when our first heart beat full and fast,
I wandered till the haunts of men were pass'd,
And in fair places found all bowers amiss
Till only woods and waves might hear our kiss,
While to the winds all thought of Death we cast:—
Ah, Life! and must I have from thee at last
No smile to greet me and no babe but this?
Lo! Love, the child once ours; and Song, whose hair
Blew like a flame and blossomed like a wreath;
And Art, whose eyes were worlds by God found fair;
These o'er the book of Nature mixed their breath
With neck-twined arms, as oft we watched them there:
And did these die that thou mightst bear me Death?

CI. THE ONE HOPE

(1870)

When vain desire at last and vain regret
Go hand in hand to death, and all is vain,
What shall assuage the unforgotten pain
And teach the unforgetful to forget?
Shall Peace be still a sunk stream long unmet,—
Or may the soul at once in a green plain
Stoop through the spray of some sweet life-fountain
And cull the dew-drenched flowering amulet?
Ah! when the wan soul in that golden air
Between the scriptured petals softly blown
Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown,
Ah! let none other alien spell soe'er
But only the one Hope's one name be there,—
Not less nor more, but even that word alone.

ROSE MARY[1]

(*1871*–1881)

Of her two fights with the Beryl-stone:
Lost the first, but the second won.

PART I

"Mary mine that art Mary's Rose,
Come in to me from the garden-close.
The sun sinks fast with the rising dew,
And we marked not how the faint moon grew;
But the hidden stars are calling you.

"Tall Rose Mary, come to my side,
And read the stars if you'd be a bride.
In hours whose need was not your own,
While you were a young maid yet ungrown,
You've read the stars in the Beryl-stone.

"Daughter, once more I bid you read;
But now let it be for your own need:
Because to-morrow, at break of day,
To Holy Cross he rides on his way,
Your knight Sir James of Heronhaye.

"Ere he wed you, flower of mine,
For heavy shrift he seeks the shrine.
Now hark to my words and do not fear;
Ill news next I have for your ear;
But be you strong, and our help is here.

"On his road, as the rumor's rife,
An ambush waits to take his life.
He needs will go, and will go alone;
Where the peril lurks may not be known;
But in this glass all things are shown."

[1] The three Beryl-songs at the ends of the three parts are omitted. They are not needed for the narrative and are generally considered inferior as poetry.

Pale Rose Mary sank to the floor:—
"The night will come if the day is o'er!"
"Nay, heaven takes counsel, star with star,
And help shall reach your heart from afar:
A bride you'll be, as a maid you are."

The lady unbound her jewelled zone
And drew from her robe the Beryl-stone.
Shaped it was to a shadowy sphere,—
World of our world, the sun's compeer,
That bears and buries the toiling year.

With shuddering light 'twas stirred and strewn
Like the cloud-nest of the wading moon:
Freaked it was as the bubble's ball,
Rainbow-hued through a misty pall
Like the middle light of the waterfall.

Shadows dwelt in its teeming girth
Of the known and unknown things of earth;
The cloud above and the wave around,—
The central fire at the sphere's heart bound,
Like doomsday prisoned underground.

A thousand years it lay in the sea
With a treasure wrecked from Thessaly;
Deep it lay 'mid the coiled sea-wrack,
But the ocean-spirits found the track:
A soul was lost to win it back.

The lady upheld the wondrous thing:—
"Ill fare" (she said) "with a fiend's-fairing:
But Moslem blood poured forth like wine
Can hallow Hell, 'neath the Sacred Sign;
And my lord brought this from Palestine.

"Spirits who fear the Blessed Rood
Drove forth the accursed multitude
That heathen worship housed herein,—
Never again such home to win,
Save only by a Christian's sin.

"All last night at an altar fair
I burnt strange fires and strove with prayer;
Till the flame paled to the red sunrise,
All rites I then did solemnize;
And the spell lacks nothing but your eyes."

Low spake maiden Rose Mary:—
"O mother mine, if I should not see!"
"Nay, daughter, cover your face no more,
But bend love's heart to the hidden lore,
And you shall see now as heretofore."

Paler yet were the pale cheeks grown
As the gray eyes sought the Beryl-stone:
Then over her mother's lap leaned she,
And stretched her thrilled throat passionately,
And sighed from her soul, and said, "I see."

Even as she spoke, they two were 'ware
Of music-notes that fell through the air;
A chiming shower of strange device,
Drop echoing drop, once, twice and thrice,
As rain may fall in Paradise.

An instant come, in an instant gone,
No time there was to think thereon.
The mother held the sphere on her knee:—
"Lean this way and speak low to me,
And take no note but of what you see."

"I see a man with a besom gray
That sweeps the flying dust away."
"Ay, that comes first in the mystic sphere;
But now that the way is swept and clear,
Heed well what next you look on there."

"Stretched aloft and adown I see
Two roads that part in waste country:
The glen lies deep and the ridge stands tall;
What's great below is above seen small,
And the hill-side is the valley-wall."

"Stream-bank, daughter, or moor and moss,
Both roads will take to Holy Cross.
The hills are a weary waste to wage;
But what of the valley-road's presage?
That way must tend his pilgrimage."

"As 'twere the turning leaves of a book,
The road runs past me as I look;
Or it is even as though mine eye
Should watch calm waters filled with sky
While lights and clouds and wings went by."

"In every covert seek a spear;
They'll scarce lie close till he draws near."
"The stream has spread to a river now;
The stiff blue sedge is deep in the slough,
But the banks are bare of shrub or bough."

"Is there any roof that near at hand
Might shelter yield to a hidden band?"
"On the further bank I see but one,
And a herdsman now in the sinking sun
Unyokes his team at the threshold-stone."

"Keep heedful watch by the water's edge,—
Some boat might lurk 'neath the shadowed sedge."
"One slid but now 'twixt the winding shores,
But a peasant woman bent to the oars
And only a young child steered its course.

"Mother, something flashed to my sight!—
Nay, it is but the lapwing's flight.—
What glints there like a lance that flees?—
Nay, the flags are stirred in the breeze,
And the water's bright through the dart-rushes.

"Ah! vainly I search from side to side:—
Woe's me! and where do the foemen hide?
Woe's me! and perchance I pass them by,
And under the new dawn's blood-red sky
Even where I gaze the dead shall lie."

Said the mother: "For dear love's sake,
Speak more low, lest the spell should break."
Said the daughter: "By love's control,
My eyes, my words, are strained to the goal;
But oh! the voice that cries in my soul!"

"Hush, sweet, hush! be calm and behold."
"I see two floodgates broken and old:
The grasses wave o'er the ruined weir,
But the bridge still leads to the break-water;
And—mother, mother, O mother dear!"

The damsel clung to her mother's knee,
And dared not let the shriek go free;
Low she crouched by the lady's chair,
And shrank blindfold in her fallen hair,
And whispering said, "The spears are there!"

The lady stooped aghast from her place,
And cleared the locks from her daughter's face.
"More's to see, and she swoons, alas!
Look, look again, ere the moment pass!
One shadow comes but once to the glass.

"See you there what you saw but now?"
"I see eight men 'neath the willow bough.
All over the weir a wild growth's spread:
Ah me! it will hide a living head
As well as the water hides the dead.

"They lie by the broken water-gate
As men who have a while to wait.
The chief's high lance has a blazoned scroll,—
He seems some lord of tithe and toll
With seven squires to his bannerole.

"The little pennon quakes in the air,
I cannot trace the blazon there:—
Ah! now I can see the field of blue,
The spurs and the merlins two and two;—
It is the Warden of Holycleugh!"

"God be thanked for the thing we know!
You have named your good knight's mortal foe.
Last Shrovetide in the tourney-game
He sought his life by treasonous shame;
And this way now doth he seek the same.

"So, fair lord, such a thing you are!
But we too watch till the morning star.
Well, June is kind and the moon is clear;
Saint Judas send you a merry cheer
For the night you lie at Warisweir!

"Now, sweet daughter, but one more sight,
And you may lie soft and sleep to-night.
We know in the vale what perils be:
Now look once more in the glass, and see
If over the hills the road lies free."

Rose Mary pressed to her mother's cheek,
And almost smiled but did not speak;
Then turned again to the saving spell,
With eyes to search and with lips to tell
The heart of things invisible.

"Again the shape with the besom gray
Comes back to sweep the clouds away.
Again I stand where the roads divide;
But now all's near on the steep hillside.
And a thread far down is the rivertide."

"Ay, child, your road is o'er moor and moss,
Past Holycleugh to Holy Cross.
Our hunters lurk in the valley's wake,
As they knew which way the chase would take:
Yet search the hills for your true love's sake."

"Swift and swifter the waste runs by,
And nought I see but the heath and the sky;
No brake is there that could hide a spear,
And the gaps to a horseman's sight lie clear;
Still past it goes, and there's nought to fear."

"Fear no trap that you cannot see,—
They'd not lurk yet too warily.
Below by the weir they lie in sight,
And take no heed how they pass the night
Till close they crouch with the morning light."

"The road shifts ever and brings in view
Now first the heights of Holycleugh:
Dark they stand o'er the vale below,
And hide that heaven which yet shall show
The thing their master's heart doth know.

"Where the road looks to the castle steep,
There are seven hill-clefts wide and deep:
Six mine eyes can search as they list,
But the seventh hollow is brimmed with mist:
If aught were there, it might not be wist."

"Small hope, my girl, for a helm to hide
In mists that cling to a wild moorside:
Soon they melt with the wind and sun,
And scarce would wait such deeds to be done:
God send their snares be the worst to shun."

"Still the road winds ever anew
As it hastens on towards Holycleugh,
And ever the great walls loom more near,
Till the castle-shadow, steep and sheer,
Drifts like a cloud, and the sky is clear."

"Enough, my daughter," the mother said,
And took to her breast the bending head;
"Rest, poor head, with my heart below,
While love still lulls you as long ago:
For all is learnt that we need to know.

"Long the miles and many the hours
From the castle-height to the abbey-towers;
But here the journey has no more dread;
Too thick with life is the whole road spread
For murder's trembling foot to tread."

She gazed on the Beryl-stone full fain
Ere she wrapped it close in her robe again:
The flickering shades were dusk and dun,
And the lights throbbed faint in unison,
Like a high heart when a race is run.

As the globe slid to its silken gloom,
Once more a music rained through the room;
Low it splashed like a sweet star-spray,
And sobbed like tears at the heart of May,
And died as laughter dies away.

The lady held her breath for a space,
And then she looked in her daughter's face;
But wan Rose Mary had never heard;
Deep asleep like a sheltered bird
She lay with the long spell minister'd.

"Ah! and yet I must leave you, dear,
For what you have seen your knight must hear.
Within four days, by the help of God,
He comes back safe to his heart's abode:
Be sure he shall shun the valley-road."

Rose Mary sank with a broken moan,
And lay in the chair and slept alone,
Weary, lifeless, heavy as lead:
Long it was ere she raised her head
And rose up all discomforted.

She searched her brain for a vanished thing,
And clasped her brows, remembering;
Then knelt and lifted her eyes in awe,
And sighed with a long sigh sweet to draw:—
"Thank God, thank God, thank God I saw!"

The lady had left her as she lay,
To seek the Knight of Heronhaye.
But first she clomb by a secret stair,
And knelt at a carven altar fair,
And laid the precious Beryl there.

Its girth was graved with a mystic rune
In a tongue long dead 'neath sun and moon:
A priest of the Holy Sepulchre
Read that writing and did not err;
And her lord had told its sense to her.

She breathed the words in an undertone:—
"None sees here but the pure alone."
"And oh!" she said, "what rose may be
In Mary's bower more pure to see
Than my own sweet maiden Rose Mary?"

PART II

"Pale Rose Mary, what shall be done
With a rose that Mary weeps upon?"
"Mother, let it fall from the tree,
And never walk where the strewn leaves be

Till winds have passed and the path is free."

"Sad Rose Mary, what shall be done
With a cankered flower beneath the sun?"
"Mother, let it wait for the night;
Be sure its shame shall be out of sight
Ere the moon pale or the east grow light."

"Lost Rose Mary, what shall be done
With a heart that is but a broken one?"
"Mother, let it lie where it must;
The blood was drained with the bitter thrust,
And dust is all that sinks in the dust."

"Poor Rose Mary, what shall I do,—
I, your mother, that lovèd you?"
"O my mother, and is love gone?
Then seek you another love anon:
Who cares what shame shall lean upon?"

Low drooped trembling Rose Mary,
Then up as though in a dream stood she.
"Come, my heart, it is time to go;
This is the hour that has whispered low
When thy pulse quailed in the nights we know.

"Yet O my heart, thy shame has a mate
Who will not leave thee desolate.
Shame for shame, yea and sin for sin:
Yet peace at length many poor souls win
If love for love be found therein.

"O thou who seek'st our shrift to-day,"
She cried, "O James of Heronhaye—
Thy sin and mine was for love alone;
And oh! in the sight of God 'tis known
How the heart has since made heavy moan.

"Three days yet!" she said to her heart;
"But then he comes, and we will not part.
God, God be thanked that I still could see!
Oh! he shall come back assuredly,
But where, alas! must he seek for me?

"O my heart, what road shall we roam
Till my wedding-music fetch me home?
For love's shut from us and bides afar,
And scorn leans over the bitter bar
And knows us now for the thing we are."

Tall she stood with a cheek flushed high
And a gaze to burn the heart-strings by.
'Twas the lightning-flash o'er sky and plain
Ere laboring thunders heave the chain
From the floodgates of the drowning rain.

The mother looked on the daughter still
As on a hurt thing that's yet to kill.
Then wildly at length the pent tears came;
The love swelled high with the swollen shame
And their hearts' tempest burst on them.

Closely locked, they clung without speech,
And the mirrored souls shook each to each,
As the cloud-moon and the water-moon
Shake face to face when the dim stars swoon
In stormy bowers of the night's mid-noon.

They swayed together, shuddering sore,
Till the mother's heart could bear no more.
'Twas death to feel her own breast shake
Even to the very throb and ache
Of the burdened heart she still must break.

All her sobs ceased suddenly,
And she sat straight up but scarce could see.
"O daughter, where should my speech begin?
Your heart held fast its secret sin:
How think you, child, that I read therein?"

"Ah me! but I thought not how it came
When your words showed that you knew my shame,
And now that you call me still your own,
I half forget you have ever known.
Did you read my heart in the Beryl-stone?"

The lady answered her mournfully:—
"The Beryl-stone has no voice for me:
But when you charged its power to show
The truth which none but the pure may know,
Did naught speak once of a coming woe?"

Her hand was close to her daughter's heart,
And it felt the life-blood's sudden start:
A quick deep breath did the damsel draw,
Like the struck fawn in the oakenshaw;
"O mother," she cried, "but still I saw!"

"O child, my child, why held you apart
From my great love your hidden heart?

Said I not that all sin must chase
From the spell's sphere the spirits of grace,
And yield their rule to the evil race?

"Ah! would to God I had clearly told
How strong those powers, accurst of old:
Their heart is the ruined house of lies;
O girl, they can seal the sinful eyes,
Or show the truth by contraries!"

The daughter sat as cold as a stone,
And spoke no word but gazed alone,
Nor moved, though her mother strove a space
To clasp her round in a close embrace,
Because she dared not see her face.

"Oh!" at last did the mother cry,
"Be sure, as he loved you, so will I!
Ah! still and dumb is the bride, I trow;
But cold and stark as the winter snow
Is the bridegroom's heart, laid dead below!

"Daughter, daughter, remember you
That cloud in the hills by Holycleugh?
'Twas a Hell-screen hiding truth away:
There, not i' the vale, the ambush lay,
And thence was the dead borne home to-day."

Deep the flood and heavy the shock
When sea meets sea in the riven rock:
But calm is the pulse that shakes the sea
To the prisoned tide of doom set free
In the breaking heart of Rose Mary.

Once she sprang as the heifer springs
With the wolf's teeth at its red heart-strings.
First 'twas fire in her breast and brain,
And then scarce hers but the whole world's pain,
As she gave one shriek and sank again.

In the hair dark-waved the face lay white
As the moon lies in the lap of night;
And as night through which no moon may dart
Lies on a pool in the woods apart,
So lay the swoon on the weary heart.

The lady felt for the bosom's stir,
And wildly kissed and called on her;
Then turned away with a quick footfall,
And slid the secret door in the wall,
And clomb the strait stair's interval.

There above in the altar-cell
A little fountain rose and fell:
She set a flask to the water's flow,
And, backward hurrying, sprinkled now
The still cold breast and the pallid brow.

Scarce cheek that warmed or breath on the air,
Yet something told that life was there.
"Ah! not with the heart the body dies!"
The lady moaned in a bitter wise;
Then wrung her hands and hid her eyes.

"Alas! and how may I meet again
In the same poor eyes the selfsame pain?
What help can I seek, such grief to guide?
Ah! one alone might avail," she cried,—
"The priest who prays at the dead man's side."

The lady arose, and sped down all
The winding stairs to the castle-hall.
Long-known valley and wood and stream,
As the loopholes passed, naught else did seem
Than the torn threads of a broken dream.

The hall was full of the castle-folk;
The women wept, but the men scarce spoke.
As the lady crossed the rush-strewn floor,
The throng fell backward, murmuring sore,
And pressed outside round the open door.

A stranger shadow hung on the hall
Than the dark pomp of a funeral.
'Mid common sights that were there alway
As 'twere a chance of the passing day,
On the ingle-bench the dead man lay.

A priest who passed by Holycleugh
The tidings brought when the day was new.
He guided them who had fetched the dead;
And since that hour, unwearièd,
He knelt in prayer at the low bier's head.

Word had gone to his own domain
That in evil wise the knight was slain:
Soon the spears must gather apace
And the hunt be hard on the hunters' trace;
But all things yet lay still for a space.

As the lady's hurried step drew near,
The kneeling priest looked up to her.
"Father, death is a grievous thing;

But oh! the woe has a sharper sting
That craves by me your ministering.

"Alas for the child that should have wed
This noble knight here lying dead!
Dead in hope, with all blessed boon
Of love thus rent from her heart ere noon,
I left her laid in a heavy swoon.

"O haste to the open bower-chamber
That's topmost as you mount the stair:
Seek her, father, ere yet she wake;
Your words, not mine, be the first to slake
This poor heart's fire, for Christ's sweet sake!

"God speed!" she said as the priest passed through,
"And I ere long will be with you."
Then low on the hearth her knees sank prone;
She signed all folk from the threshold-stone;
And gazed in the dead man's face alone.

The fight for life found record yet
In the clenchèd lips and the teeth hard-set;
The wrath from the bent brow was not gone,
And stark in the eyes the hate still shone
Of that they last had looked upon.

The blazoned coat was rent on his breast
Where the golden field was goodliest;
But the shivered sword, close-gripped, could tell
That the blood shed round him where he fell
Was not all his in the distant dell.

The lady recked of the corpse no whit,
But saw the soul and spoke to it:
A light there was in her steadfast eyes,—
The fire of mortal tears and sighs
That pity and love immortalize.

"By thy death have I learnt to-day
Thy deed, O James of Heronhaye!
Great wrong thou hast done to me and mine;
And haply God hath wrought for a sign
By our blind deed this doom of thine.

"Thy shrift, alas! thou wast not to win;
But may death shrive thy soul herein!
Full well do I know thy love should be
Even yet—had life but stayed with thee—
Our honor's strong security."

She stooped, and said with a sob's low stir,—
"Peace be thine,—but what peace for her?"
But ere to the brow her lips were press'd,
She marked, half-hid in the riven vest,
A packet close to the dead man's breast.

'Neath surcoat pierced and broken mail
It lay on the blood-stained bosom pale.
The clot clung round it, dull and dense,
And a faintness seized her mortal sense
As she reached her hand and drew it thence.

'Twas steeped in the heart's flood welling high
From the heart it there had rested by:
'Twas glued to a broidered fragment gay,—
A shred by spear-thrust rent away
From the heron-wings of Heronhaye.

She gazed on the thing with piteous eyne:—
"Alas, poor child, some pledge of thine!
Ah me! in this troth the hearts were twain,
And one hath ebbed to this crimson stain,
And when shall the other throb again?"

She opened the packet heedfully;
The blood was stiff, and it scarce might be.
She found but a folded paper there,
And round it, twined with tenderest care,
A long bright tress of golden hair.

Even as she looked, she saw again
That dark-haired face in its swoon of pain:
It seemed a snake with a golden sheath
Crept near, as a slow flame flickereth,
And stung her daughter's heart to death.

She loosed the tress, but her hand did shake
As though indeed she had touched a snake;
And next she undid the paper's fold,
But that too trembled in her hold,
And the sense scarce grasped the tale it told.

"My heart's sweet lord," ('twas thus she read,)
"At length our love is garlanded.
At Holy Cross, within eight days' space,
I seek my shrift; and the time and place
Shall fit thee too for thy soul's good grace.

"From Holycleugh on the seventh day
My brother rides, and bides away:
And long or e'er he is back, mine own,

Afar where the face of fear's unknown
We shall be safe with our love alone.

"Ere yet at the shrine my knees I bow,
I shear one tress for our holy vow.
As round these words these threads I wind,
So, eight days hence, shall our loves be twined
Says my lord's poor lady, JOCELIND."

She read it twice, with a brain in thrall,
And then its echo told her all.
O'er brows low-fall'n her hands she drew:—
"O God!" she said, as her hands fell too,—
"The Warden's sister of Holycleugh!"

She rose upright with a long low moan,
And stared in the dead man's face new-known.
Had it lived indeed? She scarce could tell:
'Twas a cloud where fiends had come to dwell,—
A mask that hung on the gate of Hell.

She lifted the lock of gleaming hair
And smote the lips and left it there.
"Here's gold that Hell shall take for thy toll!
Full well hath thy treason found its goal,
O thou dead body and damnèd soul!"

She turned, sore dazed, for a voice was near,
And she knew that some one called to her.
On many a column fair and tall
A high court ran round the castle-hall;
And thence it was that the priest did call.

"I sought your child where you bade me go,
And in rooms around and rooms below;
But where, alas! may the maiden be?
Fear nought,—we shall find her speedily,—
But come, come hither, and seek with me."

She reached the stair like a lifelorn thing,
But hastened upward murmuring:—
"Yea, Death's is a face that's fell to see;
But bitterer pang Life hoards for thee,
Thou broken heart of Rose Mary!"

PART III

A swoon that breaks is the whelming wave
When help comes late but still can save.
With all blind throes is the instant rife,—
Hurtling clangor and clouds at strife,—
The breath of death, but the kiss of life.

The night lay deep on Rose Mary's heart,
For her swoon was death's kind counterpart:
The dawn broke dim on Rose Mary's soul,—
No hill-crown's heavenly aureole,
But a wild gleam on a shaken shoal.

Her senses gasped in the sudden air,
And she looked around, but none was there.
She felt the slackening frost distil
Through her blood the last ooze dull and chill:
Her lids were dry and her lips were still.

Her tears had flooded her heart again;
As after a long day's bitter rain,
At dusk when the wet flower-cups shrink,
The drops run in from the beaded brink,
And all the close-shut petals drink.

Again her sighs on her heart were rolled;
As the wind that long has swept the wold,—
Whose moan was made with the moaning sea,—
Beats out its breath in the last torn tree,
And sinks at length in lethargy.

She knew she had waded bosom-deep
Along death's bank in the sedge of sleep:
All else was lost to her clouded mind;
Nor, looking back, could she see defin'd
O'er the dim dumb waste what lay behind.

Slowly fades the sun from the wall
Till day lies dead on the sun-dial:
And now in Rose Mary's lifted eye
'Twas shadow alone that made reply
To the set face of the soul's dark sky.

Yet still through her soul there wandered past
Dread phantoms borne on a wailing blast,
Death and sorrow and sin and shame;
And, murmured still, to her lips there came
Her mother's and her lover's name.

How to ask, and what thing to know?
She might not stay and she dared not go.
From fires unseen these smoke-clouds curled;
But where did the hidden curse lie furled?
And how to seek through the weary world?

With toiling breath she rose from the floor
And dragged her steps to an open door:
'Twas the secret panel standing wide,
As the lady's hand had let it bide
In hastening back to her daughter's side.

She passed, but reeled with a dizzy brain
And smote the door which closed again.
She stood within by the darkling stair,
But her feet might mount more freely there,—
'Twas the open light most blinded her.

Within her mind no wonder grew
At the secret path she never knew:
All ways alike were strange to her now,—
One field bare-ridged from the spirit's plough,
One thicket black with the cypress-bough.

Once she thought that she heard her name;
And she paused, but knew not whence it came,
Down the shadowed stair a faint ray fell
That guided the weary footsteps well
Till it led her up to the altar-cell.

No change there was on Rose Mary's face
As she leaned in the portal's narrow space:
Still she stood by the pillar's stem,
Hand and bosom and garment's hem,
As the soul stands by at the requiem.

The altar-cell was a dome low-lit,
And a veil hung in the midst of it:
At the pole-points of its circling girth
Four symbols stood of the world's first birth,—
Air and water and fire and earth.

To the north, a fountain glittered free;
To the south, there glowed a red fruit-tree;
To the east, a lamp flamed high and fair;
To the west, a crystal casket rare
Held fast a cloud of the fields of air.

The painted walls were a mystic show
Of time's ebb-tide and overflow;
His hoards long-locked and conquering key,
His service-fires that in heaven be,
And earth-wheels whirled perpetually.

Rose Mary gazed from the open door
As on idle things she cared not for,—
The fleeting shapes of an empty tale;
Then stepped with a heedless visage pale,
And lifted aside the altar veil.

The altar stood from its curved recess
In a coiling serpent's life-likeness:
Even such a serpent evermore
Lies deep asleep at the world's dark core
Till the last Voice shake the sea and shore.

From the altar-cloth a book rose spread
And tapers burned at the altar-head,
And there in the altar-midst alone,
'Twixt wings of a sculptured beast unknown,
Rose Mary saw the Beryl-stone.

Firm it sat 'twixt the hollowed wings,
As an orb sits in the hand of kings;
And lo! for that Foe whose curse far-flown
Had bound her life with a burning zone,
Rose Mary knew the Beryl-stone.

Dread is the meteor's blazing sphere
When the poles throb to its blind career;
But not with a light more grim and ghast
Thereby is the future doom forecast,
Than now this sight brought back the past.

The hours and minutes seemed to whir
In a clanging swarm that deafened her;
They stung her heart to a writhing flame,
And marshalled past in its glare they came,—
Death and sorrow and sin and shame.

Round the Beryl's sphere she saw them pass
And mock her eyes the fated glass:
One by one in a fiery train
The dead hours seemed to wax and wane,
And burned till all was known again.

From the drained heart's fount there rose no cry,
There sprang no tears, for the source was dry.
Held in the hand of some heavy law,
Her eyes she might not once withdraw,
Nor shrink away from the thing she saw.

Even as she gazed, through all her blood
The flame was quenched in a coming flood:
Out of the depth of the hollow gloom
On her soul's bare sands she felt it boom,—
The measured tide of a sea of doom.

Three steps she took through the altar-gate,
And her neck reared and her arms grew straight:
The sinews clenched like a serpent's throe,
And the face was white in the dark hair's flow,
As her hate beheld what lay below.

Dumb she stood in her malisons,—
A silver statue tressed with bronze:
As the fabled head by Perseus mown,
It seemed in sooth that her gaze alone
Had turned the carven shapes to stone.

O'er the altar-sides on either hand
There hung a dinted helm and brand:
By strength thereof, 'neath the Sacred Sign,
That better gift o'er the salt sea-brine
Her father brought from Palestine.

Rose Mary moved with a stern accord
And reached her hand to her father's sword;
Nor did she stir her gaze one whit
From the thing whereon her brows were knit;
But gazing still, she spoke to it.

"O ye, three times accurst," she said,
"By whom this stone is tenanted!
Lo! here ye came by a strong sin's might;
Yet a sinner's hand that's weak to smite
Shall send you hence ere the day be night.

"This hour a clear voice bade me know
My hand shall work your overthrow:
Another thing in mine ear it spake,—
With the broken spell my life shall break.
I thank Thee, God, for the dear death's sake!

"And he Thy heavenly minister
Who swayed erewhile this spell-bound sphere,—
My parting soul let him haste to greet,
And none but he be guide for my feet
To where Thy rest is made complete."

Then deep she breathed, with a tender moan:—
"My love, my lord, my only one!
Even as I held the cursèd clue,
When thee, through me, these foul ones slew,—
By mine own deed shall they slay me too!

"Even while they speed to Hell, my love,
Two hearts shall meet in Heaven above.
Our shrift thou sought'st, but might'st not bring:
And oh! for me 'tis a blessed thing
To work hereby our ransoming.

"One were our hearts in joy and pain,
And our souls e'en now grow one again.
And O my love, if our souls are three,
O thine and mine shall the third soul be,—
One threefold love eternally."

Her eyes were soft as she spoke apart,
And the lips smiled to the broken heart:
But the glance was dark and the forehead scored
With the bitter frown of hate restored,
As her two hands swung the heavy sword.

Three steps back from her Foe she trod:—
"Love, for thy sake! In Thy name, O God!"
In the fair white hands small strength was shown;
Yet the blade flashed high and the edge fell prone,
And she cleft the heart of the Beryl-stone.

What living flesh in the thunder-cloud
Hath sat and felt heaven cry aloud?
Or known how the levin's pulse may beat?
Or wrapped the hour when the whirlwinds meet
About its breast for a winding-sheet?

Who hath crouched at the world's deep heart
While the earthquake rends its loins apart?
Or walked far under the seething main
While overhead the heavens ordain
The tempest-towers of the hurricane?

Who hath seen or what ear hath heard
The secret things unregister'd
Of the place where all is past and done,
And tears and laughter sound as one
In Hell's unhallowed unison?

Nay, is it writ how the fiends despair
In earth and water and fire and air?
Even so no mortal tongue may tell
How to the clang of the sword that fell
The echoes shook the altar-cell.

When all was still on the air again
The Beryl-stone lay cleft in twain;

The veil was rent from the riven dome;
And every wind that's winged to roam
Might have the ruined place for home.

The fountain no more glittered free;
The fruit hung dead on the leafless tree;
The flame of the lamp had ceased to flare:
And the crystal casket shattered there
Was emptied now of its cloud of air.

And lo! on the ground Rose Mary lay,
With a cold brow like the snows ere May,
With a cold breast like the earth till Spring,
With such a smile as the June days bring
When the year grows warm for harvesting.

The death she had won might leave no trace
On the soft sweet form and gentle face:
In a gracious sleep she seemed to lie;
And over her head her hand on high
Held fast the sword she triumphed by.

'Twas then a clear voice said in the room:—
"Behold the end of the heavy doom.
O come,—for thy bitter love's sake blest;
By a sweet path now thou journeyest,
And I will lead thee to thy rest.

"Me thy sin by Heaven's sore ban
Did chase erewhile from the talisman:
But to my heart, as a conquered home,
In glory of strength thy footsteps come
Who has thus cast forth my foes therefrom.

"Already thy heart remembereth
No more his name thou sought'st in death:
For under all deeps, all heights above,—
So wide the gulf in the midst thereof,—
Are Hell of Treason and Heaven of Love.

"Thee, true soul, shall thy truth prefer
To blessed Mary's rose-bower:
Warmed and lit is thy place afar
With guerdon-fires of the sweet Love-star
Where hearts of steadfast lovers are:—

"Though naught for the poor corpse lying here
Remain to-day but the cold white bier,
But burial-chaunt and bended knee,
But sighs and tears that heaviest be,
But rent rose-flower and rosemary."

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI (1830–1894)

VANITY OF VANITIES

(*1847*)

Ah woe is me for pleasure that is vain,
Ah woe is me for glory that is past!
Pleasure that bringeth sorrow at the last,
Glory that at the last bringeth no gain.
So saith the sinking heart; and so again
It shall say till the mighty angel-blast
Is blown, making the sun and moon aghast,
And showering down the stars like sudden rain.
And evermore men shall go fearfully,
Bending beneath their weight of heaviness;
And ancient men shall lie down wearily,
And strong men shall rise up in weariness:
Yea even the young shall answer sighingly,
Saying one to another "How vain it is!"

SONG

(*1848*)

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet:
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on as if in pain:

And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

THE THREE ENEMIES

(*1851*)

THE FLESH

"Sweet, thou art pale."
"More pale to see,
Christ hung upon the cruel tree
And bore His Father's wrath for me."

"Sweet, thou art sad."
"Beneath a rod
More heavy, Christ for my sake trod
The winepress of the wrath of God."

"Sweet, thou art weary."
"Not so Christ;
Whose mighty love of me sufficed
For Strength, Salvation, Eucharist."

"Sweet, thou art footsore."
"If I bleed,
His feet have bled; yea in my need
His Heart once bled for mine indeed."

THE WORLD

"Sweet, thou art young."
"So He was young
Who for my sake in silence hung
Upon the Cross with Passion wrung."

"Look, thou art fair."
"He was more fair
Than men, Who deigned for me to wear
A visage marred beyond compare."

"And thou hast riches."
"Daily bread:
All else is His: Who, living, dead,
For me lacked where to lay His Head."

"And life is sweet."
"It was not so
To Him, Whose Cup did overflow
With mine unutterable woe."

THE DEVIL

"Thou drinkest deep."
"When Christ would sup
He drained the dregs from out my cup:
So how should I be lifted up?"

"Thou shalt win Glory."
"In the skies,
Lord Jesus, cover up mine eyes
Lest they should look on vanities."

"Thou shalt have Knowledge."
"Helpless dust!
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust:
Answer Thou for me, Wise and Just."

"And Might."—
"Get thee behind me. Lord,
Who hast redeemed and not abhorred
My soul, oh keep it by Thy Word."

AN END

(*1849*)

Love, strong as Death, is dead.
Come, let us make his bed
Among the dying flowers:
A green turf at his head;
And a stone at his feet,
Whereon we may sit
In the quiet evening hours.

He was born in the spring,
And died before the harvesting:
On the last warm summer day
He left us; he would not stay
For autumn twilight cold and grey.
Sit we by his grave, and sing
He is gone away.

To few chords and sad and low
Sing we so:
Be our eyes fixed on the grass
Shadow-veiled as the years pass,
While we think of all that was
In the long ago.

DREAM LAND

(*1849*)

Where sunless rivers weep
Their waves into the deep,
She sleeps a charmèd sleep:
Awake her not.
Led by a single star,
She came from very far
To seek where shadows are
Her pleasant lot.

She left the rosy morn,
She left the fields of corn,
For twilight cold and lorn
And water springs.
Through sleep, as through a veil,
She sees the sky look pale,
And hears the nightingale
That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest
Shed over brow and breast;
Her face is toward the west,
The purple land.
She cannot see the grain
Ripening on hill and plain,
She cannot feel the rain
Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore
Upon a mossy shore;
Rest, rest at the heart's core
Till time shall cease:
Sleep that no pain shall wake;
Night that no morn shall break,
Till joy shall overtake
Her perfect peace.

AFTER DEATH

(*1849*)

The curtains were half drawn, the floor was swept
And strewn with rushes, rosemary and may
Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
Where through the lattice ivy-shadows crept.
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
And could not hear him; but I heard him say,
"Poor child, poor child": and as he turned away
Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold
That hid my face, or take my hand in his,
Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head:
He did not love me living; but once dead
He pitied me; and very sweet it is
To know he still is warm though I am cold.

REST

(*1849*)

O earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth
Of all that irked her from the hour of birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir:
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
And when she wakes she will not think it long.

LIFE HIDDEN

(*1849*)

Roses and lilies grow above the place
Where she sleeps the long sleep that doth not dream.
If we could look upon her hidden face,
Nor shadow would be there, nor garish gleam
Of light; her life is lapsing like a stream
That makes no noise but floweth on apace
Seawards, while many a shade and shady beam
Vary the ripples in their gliding chase.
She doth not see, but knows; she doth not feel,
And yet is sensible; she hears no sound,
Yet counts the flight of time and doth not err.
Peace far and near, peace to ourselves and her:
Her body is at peace in holy ground,
Her spirit is at peace where Angels kneel.

REMEMBER

(*1849*)

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;

When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

THE P. R. B.

(*1853*)

The two Rossettis (brothers they)
And Holman Hunt and John Millais,
With Stephens chivalrous and bland,
And Woolner in a distant land—
In these six men I awestruck see
Embodied the great P. R. B.
D. G. Rossetti offered two
Good pictures to the public view;
Unnumbered ones great John Millais,
And Holman more than I can say.
William Rossetti, calm and solemn,
Cuts up his brethren by the column.

PARADISE

(*1854*)

Once in a dream I saw the flowers
That bud and bloom in Paradise;
More fair they are than waking eyes
Have seen in all this world of ours.
And faint the perfume-bearing rose,
And faint the lily on its stem,
And faint the perfect violet,
Compared with them.

I heard the songs of Paradise:
Each bird sat singing in his place;
A tender song so full of grace
It soared like incense to the skies.
Each bird sat singing to his mate
Soft cooing notes among the trees:
The nightingale herself were cold
To such as these.

I saw the fourfold River flow,
And deep it was, with golden sand;
It flowed between a mossy land
With murmured music grave and low.
It hath refreshment for all thirst,
For fainting spirits strength and rest;
Earth holds not such a draught as this
From east to west.

The Tree of Life stood budding there,
Abundant with its twelvefold fruits;
Eternal sap sustains its roots,
Its shadowing branches fill the air.
Its leaves are healing for the world,
Its fruit the hungry world can feed,
Sweeter than honey to the taste
And balm indeed.

I saw the Gate called Beautiful;
And looked, but scarce could look within;
I saw the golden streets begin,
And outskirts of the glassy pool.
Oh harps, oh crowns of plenteous stars,
Oh green palm branches many-leaved—
Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard,
Nor heart conceived.

I hope to see these things again,
But not as once in dreams by night;
To see them with my very sight,
And touch and handle and attain:
To have all heaven beneath my feet
For narrow way that once they trod;
To have my part with all the saints,
And with my God.

A BIRTHDAY

(*1857*)

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot:
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

UP-HILL

(*1858*)

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
  Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
  From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
  A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
  You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
  Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
  They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
  Of labor you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
  Yea, beds for all who come.

AT HOME

(*1858*)

When I was dead, my spirit turned
  To seek the much-frequented house.
I passed the door, and saw my friends
  Feasting beneath green orange-boughs;
From hand to hand they pushed the wine,
  They sucked the pulp of plum and peach;
They sang, they jested, and they laughed,
  For each was loved of each.

I listened to their honest chat.
  Said one: "To-morrow we shall be
Plod plod along the featureless sands,
  And coasting miles and miles of sea."
Said one: "Before the turn of tide
  We will achieve the eyrie-seat."
Said one: "To-morrow shall be like
  To-day, but much more sweet."

"To-morrow," said they, strong with hope,
  And dwelt upon the pleasant way:
"To-morrow," cried they one and all,
  While no one spoke of yesterday.
Their life stood full at blessed noon;
  I, only I, had passed away:
"To-morrow and to-day," they cried;
  I was of yesterday.

I shivered comfortless, but cast
  No chill across the tablecloth;
I all-forgotten shivered, sad
  To stay and yet to part how loth:
I passed from the familiar room,
  I who from love had passed away,
Like the remembrance of a guest
  That tarrieth but a day.

GOBLIN MARKET

(*1859–1862*)

  Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy."

  Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
"Lie close," Laura said,

Pricking up her golden head:
"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?"
"Come buy," call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.
"Oh," cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men."
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look;
Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
"Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Through those fruit bushes."
"No," said Lizzie: "No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us."
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped at a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards to the mossy glen
Turned and trooped the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
"Come buy, come buy."
When they reached where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One reared his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown
(Men sell not such in any town);
One heaved the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:
"Come buy, come buy," was still their cry.
Laura stared but did not stir,
Longed but had no money:
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,
The cat-faced purr'd,
The rat-paced spoke a word
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
One parrot-voiced and jolly
Cried "Pretty Goblin" still for "Pretty Polly";—
One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
"Good folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin:
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather."
"You have much gold upon your head,"
They answered all together:
"Buy from us with a golden curl."
She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flowed that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
She sucked until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gathered up one kernel stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
"Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.

Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the moonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so."
"Nay, hush," said Laura:
"Nay, hush, my sister:
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still;
To-morrow night I will
Buy more": and kissed her:
"Have done with sorrow;
I'll bring you plums to-morrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap."

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtained bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipped with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro
Round their nest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crowed his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
Aired and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
Talked as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homeward said: "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags,
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loitered still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill:
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy,"
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, "Oh Laura, come;
I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glowworm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark:
For clouds may gather

Though this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us through;
Then if we lost our way what should we do?"

Laura turned cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
"Come buy our fruits, come buy."
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
Must she no more such succous pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life drooped from the root;
She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry:
"Come buy, come buy";—
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon waxed bright
Her hair grew thin and grey;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watched for a waxing shoot,
But there came none;
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook,
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister's cankerous care
Yet not to share.
She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy";—
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The voice and stir
Poor Laura could not hear;
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her
But feared to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest Winter time,
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp Winter time.

Till Laura dwindling
Seemed knocking at Death's door:
Then Lizzie weighed no more
Better and worse;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel- and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes,—
Hugged her and kissed her:

Squeezed and caressed her:
Stretched up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
"Look at our apples
Russet and dun,.
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,
Pomegranates, figs."—

"Good folk," said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
"Give me much and many":—
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.
"Nay, take a seat with us,
Honor and eat with us,"
They answered grinning:
"Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry:
Such fruits as these
No man can carry;
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavor would pass by.
Sit down and feast with us,
Be welcome guest with us,
Cheer you, and rest with us."—
"Thank you," said Lizzie: "But one waits
At home alone for me:
So without further parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits though much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee."—
They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.
One called her proud,
Cross-grained, uncivil;
Their tones waxed loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,
Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood,—
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,
Sending up a golden fire, —
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—
Like a royal virgin town
Topped with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguered by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Though the goblins cuffed and caught her,
Coaxed and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
Kicked and knocked her,
Mauled and mocked her,
Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syrupped all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.
At last the evil people
Worn out by her resistance
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along whichever road they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse,—
Its bounce was music to her ear.
She ran and ran
As if she feared some goblin man
Dogged her with gibe or curse
Or something worse;

But not one goblin skurried after,
Nor was she pricked by fear;
The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried "Laura," up the garden,
"Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me:
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutched her hair:
"Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?
Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,
Undone in mine undoing
And ruined in my ruin,
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?"—
She clung about her sister,
Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
Tears once again
Refreshed her shrunken eyes
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loathed the feast:
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks streamed like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins, knocked at her heart,
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame;
She gorged on bitterness without a name:
Ah! fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care!
Sense failed in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
That night long Lizzie watched by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
With tears and fanning leaves:
But when the first birds chirped about their eaves,
And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laughed in the innocent old way,
Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey,
Her breath was sweet as May
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years
Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own,
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,
Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poisons in the blood;
(Men sell not such in any town:)
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:

Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together,
"For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands."

THE PRINCE'S PROGRESS

(*1861–1865*–1866)

Till all sweet gums and juices flow,
Till the blossom of blossoms blow,
The long hours go and come and go;
The bride she sleepeth, waketh, sleepeth,
Waiting for one whose coming is slow:—
Hark! the bride weepeth.

"How long shall I wait, come heat come rime?"—
"Till the strong Prince comes, who must come in time"
(Her women say): "there's a mountain to climb,
A river to ford. Sleep, dream and sleep;
Sleep" (they say): "we've muffled the chime;
Better dream than weep."

In his world-end palace the strong Prince sat,
Taking his ease on cushion and mat;
Close at hand lay his staff and his hat.
"When wilt thou start? the bride waits, O youth."—
"Now the moon's at full; I tarried for that;
Now I start in truth.

"But tell me first, true voice of my doom,
Of my veiled bride in her maiden bloom;
Keeps she watch through glare and through gloom,
Watch for me asleep and awake?"—
"Spell-bound she watches in one white room,
And is patient for thy sake.

"By her head lilies and rosebuds grow:
The lilies droop, will the rosebuds blow?
The silver slim lilies hang the head low;
Their stream is scanty, their sunshine rare:
Let the sun blaze out, and let the stream flow,
They will blossom and wax fair.

"Red and white poppies grow at her feet.
The blood-red wait for sweet summer heat,
Wrapped in bud-coats, hairy and neat;
But the white buds swell, one day they will burst,
Will open their death cups drowsy and sweet:—
Which will open the first?"

Then a hundred sad voices lifted a wail,
And a hundred glad voices piped on the gale:
"Time is short, life is short," they took up the tale:
"Life is sweet, love is sweet, use to-day while you may;
Love is sweet, and to-morrow may fail;
Love is sweet, use to-day."

While the song swept by, beseeching and meek,
Up rose the Prince with a flush on his cheek,
Up he rose to stir and to seek,
Going forth in the joy of his strength:
Strong of limb if of purpose weak,
Starting at length.

Forth he set in the breezy morn,
Across green fields of nodding corn,
As goodly a Prince as ever was born,
Carolling with the carolling lark;—
Sure his bride will be won and worn
Ere fall of the dark.

So light his step, so merry his smile,
A milkmaid loitered beside a stile,
Set down her pail and rested awhile,
A wave-haired milkmaid, rosy and white;
The Prince, who had journeyed at least a mile,
Grew athirst at the sight.

"Will you give me a morning draught?"—
"You're kindly welcome," she said, and laughed.
He lifted the pail, new milk he quaffed;
Then wiping his curly black beard like silk:
"Whitest cow that ever was calved
Surely gave you this milk."

Was it milk now, or was it cream?
Was she a maid, or an evil dream?
Her eyes began to glitter and gleam;
He would have gone, but he stayed instead;
Green they gleamed as he looked in them:
"Give me my fee," she said.—

"I will give you a jewel of gold."—
"Not so; gold is heavy and cold."—
"I will give you a velvet fold
Of foreign work your beauty to deck."—
"Better I like my kerchief rolled
Light and white round my neck."—

"Nay," cried he, "but fix your own fee."—
She laughed, "You may give the full moon to me,
Or else sit under this apple-tree
Here for one idle day by my side;
After that I'll let you go free,
And the world is wide."

Loth to stay, yet to leave her slack,
He half turned away, then he quite turned back:
For courtesy's sake he could not lack
To redeem his own royal pledge;
Ahead too the windy heaven lowered black
With a fire-cloven edge.

So he stretched his length in the apple-tree shade,
Lay and laughed and talked to the maid,
Who twisted her hair in a cunning braid
And writhed it in shining serpent-coils,
And held him a day and a night fast laid
In her subtle toils.

At the death of night and the birth of day,
When the owl left off his sober play,
And the bat hung himself out of the way,
Woke the song of mavis and merle,
And heaven put off its hodden grey
For mother-o'-pearl.

Peeped up daisies here and there,
Here, there, and everywhere;
Rose a hopeful lark in the air,
Spreading out towards the sun his breast;
While the moon set solemn and fair
Away in the West.

"Up, up, up," called the watchman lark,
In his clear réveillée; "Hearken, oh hark!
Press to the high goal, fly to the mark.
Up, O sluggard, new morn is born;
If still asleep when the night falls dark,
Thou must wait a second morn."

"Up, up, up," sad glad voices swelled:
"So the tree falls and lies as it's felled.
Be thy bands loosed, O sleeper, long held
In sweet sleep whose end is not sweet.
Be the slackness girt and the softness quelled
And the slowness fleet."

Off he set. The grass grew rare,
A blight lurked in the darkening air,
The very moss grew hueless and spare,
The last daisy stood all astunt;
Behind his back the soil lay bare,
But barer in front.

A land of chasm and rent, a land
Of rugged blackness on either hand:
If water trickled its track was tanned
With an edge of rust to the chink;
If one stamped on stone or on sand
It returned a clink.

A lifeless land, a loveless land,
Without lair or nest on either hand:
Only scorpions jerked in the sand,
Black as black iron, or dusty pale;
From point to point sheer rock was manned
By scorpions in mail.

A land of neither life nor death,
Where no man buildeth or fashioneth,
Where none draws living or dying breath;
No man cometh or goeth there,
No man doeth, seeketh, saith,
In the stagnant air.

Some old volcanic upset must
Have rent the crust and blackened the crust,
Wrenched and ribbed it beneath its dust,
Above earth's molten centre at seethe,
Heaved and heaped it by huge upthrust
Of fire beneath.

Untrodden before, untrodden since:
Tedious land for a social Prince;
Halting, he scanned the outs and ins,
Endless, labyrinthine, grim,
Of the solitude that made him wince,
Laying wait for him.

By bulging rock and gaping cleft,
Even of half mere daylight reft,

Rueful he peered to right and left,
Muttering in his altered mood:
"The fate is hard that weaves my weft,
Though my lot be good."

Dim the changes of day to night,
Of night scarce dark to day not bright.
Still his road wound towards the right,
Still he went, and still he went,
Till one night he spied a light,
In his discontent.

Out it flashed from a yawn-mouthed cave,
Like a red-hot eye from a grave.
No man stood there of whom to crave
Rest for wayfarer plodding by:
Though the tenant were churl or knave
The Prince might try.

In he passed and tarried not,
Groping his way from spot to spot,
Towards where the cavern flare glowed hot:
An old, old mortal, cramped and double,
Was peering into a seething-pot,
In a world of trouble.

The veriest atomy he looked,
With grimy fingers clutching and crooked,
Tight skin, a nose all bony and hooked,
And a shaking, sharp, suspicious way;
Blinking, his eyes had scarcely brooked
The light of day.

Stared the Prince, for the sight was new;
Stared, but asked without more ado;
"May a weary traveller lodge with you,
Old father, here in your lair?
In your country the inns seem few,
And scanty the fare."

The head turned not to hear him speak;
The old voice whistled as through a leak
(Out it came in a quavering squeak):
"Work for wage is a bargain fit:
If there's aught of mine that you seek
You must work for it.

"Buried alive from light and air
This year is the hundredth year,
I feed my fire with a sleepless care,
Watching my potion wane or wax:
Elixir of Life is simmering there,
And but one thing lacks.

"If you're fain to lodge with me,
Take that pair of bellows you see—
Too heavy for my old hands they be—
Take the bellows and puff and puff:
When the steam curls rosy and free
The broth's boiled enough.

"Then take your choice of all I have;
I will give you life if you crave.
Already I'm mildewed for the grave,
So first myself I must drink my fill:
But all the rest may be yours, to save
Whomever you will."

"Done," quoth the Prince, and the bargain stood.
First he piled on resinous wood,
Next plied the bellows in hopeful mood:
Thinking, "My love and I will live.
If I tarry, why life is good,
And she may forgive."

The pot began to bubble and boil;
The old man cast in essence and oil,
He stirred all up with a triple coil
Of gold and silver and iron wire,
Dredged in a pinch of virgin soil,
And fed the fire.

But still the steam curled watery white;
Night turned to day and day to night;
One thing lacked, by his feeble sight
Unseen, unguessed by his feeble mind:
Life might miss him, but Death the blight
Was sure to find.

So when the hundredth year was full
The thread was cut and finished the school.
Death snapped the old worn-out tool,
Snapped him short while he stood and stirred
(Though stiff he stood as a stiff-necked mule)
With never a word.

Thus at length the old crab was nipped.
The dead hand slipped, the dead finger dipped
In the broth as the dead man slipped:—
That same instant, a rosy red
Flushed the steam, and quivered and clipped
Round the dead old head.

The last ingredient was supplied
(Unless the dead man mistook or lied).
Up started the Prince, he cast aside
The bellows plied through the tedious trial,

Made sure that his host had died,
And filled a phial.

"One night's rest," thought the Prince:
"This done,
Forth I speed with the rising sun:
With the morrow I rise and run,
Come what will of wind or of weather.
This draught of life, when my bride is won,
We'll drink together."

Thus the dead man stayed in his grave,
Self-chosen, the dead man in his cave;
There he stayed, were he fool or knave,
Or honest seeker who had not found:
While the Prince outside was prompt to crave
Sleep on the ground.

"If she watches, go bid her sleep;
Bid her sleep, for the road is steep:
He can sleep who holdeth her cheap,
Sleep and wake and sleep again.
Let him sow, one day he shall reap,
Let him sow the grain.

"When there blows a sweet garden rose,
Let it bloom and wither if no man knows:
But if one knows when the sweet thing blows,
Knows, and lets it open and drop,
If but a nettle his garden grows
He hath earned the crop."

Through his sleep the summons rang,
Into his ears it sobbed and it sang.
Slow he woke with a drowsy pang,
Shook himself without much debate,
Turned where he saw green branches hang,
Started though late.

For the black land was travelled o'er.
He should see the grim land no more.
A flowering country stretched before
His face when the lovely day came back:
He hugged the phial of Life he bore,
And resumed his track.

By willow courses he took his path,
Spied what a nest the kingfisher hath,
Marked the fields green to aftermath,
Marked where the red-brown field-mouse ran,
Loitered a while for a deep stream bath,
Yawned for a fellow-man.

Up on the hills not a soul in view,
In the vale not many nor few;
Leaves, still leaves and nothing new.
It's oh for a second maiden, at least,
To bear the flagon, and taste it too,
And flavor the feast.

Lagging he moved, and apt to swerve;
Lazy of limb, but quick of nerve.
At length the water-bed took a curve,
The deep river swept its bankside bare;
Waters streamed from the hill-reserve—
Waters here, waters there.

High above and deep below,
Bursting, bubbling, swelling the flow,
Like hill torrents after the snow,—
Bubbling, gurgling, in whirling strife,
Swaying, sweeping to and fro,—
He must swim for his life.

Which way?—which way?—his eyes grew dim
With the dizzying whirl—which way to swim?
The thunderous downshoot deafened him;
Half he choked in the lashing spray:
Life is sweet, and the grave is grim—
Which way?—which way?

A flash of light, a shout from the strand:
"This way—this way; here lies the land!"
His phial clutched in one drowning hand;
He catches—misses—catches a rope;
His feet slip on the slipping sand:
Is there life?—is there hope?

Just saved, without pulse or breath—
Scarcely saved from the gulp of death;
Laid where a willow shadoweth—
Laid where a swelling turf is smooth.
(O Bride! but the Bridegroom lingereth
For all thy sweet youth.)

Kind hands do and undo,
Kind voices whisper and coo:
"I will chafe his hands"—"And I"—"And you
Raise his head, put his hair aside."
(If many laugh, one well may rue:
Sleep on, thou Bride.)

So the Prince was tended with care:
One wrung foul ooze from his clustered hair;

Two chafed his hands, and did not spare;
But one propped his head that drooped awry:
Till his eyes oped, and at unaware
They met eye to eye.

Oh a moon face in a shadowy place,
And a light touch and a winsome grace,
And a thrilling tender voice which says:
"Safe from waters that seek the sea—
Cold waters by rugged ways—
Safe with me."

While overhead bird whistles to bird,
And round about plays a gamesome herd:
"Safe with us"—some take up the word—
"Safe with us, dear lord and friend:
All the sweeter if long deferred
Is rest in the end."

Had he stayed to weigh and to scan,
He had been more or less than a man:
He did what a young man can,
Spoke of toil and an arduous way—
Toil to-morrow, while golden ran
The sands of to-day.

Slip past, slip fast,
Uncounted hours from first to last,
Many hours till the last is past,
Many hours dwindling to one—
One hour whose die is cast,
One last hour gone.

Come, gone—gone for ever—
Gone as an unreturning river—
Gone as to death the merriest liver—
Gone as the year at the dying fall—
To-morrow, to-day, yesterday, never—
Gone once for all.

Came at length the starting-day,
With last words, and last last words to say,
With bodiless cries from far away—
Chiding wailing voices that rang
Like a trumpet-call to the tug and fray;
And thus they sang:

"Is there life?—the lamp burns low:
Is there hope?—the coming is slow:
The promise promised so long ago,
The long promise, has not been kept.
Does she live?—does she die?—she slumbers so
Who so oft has wept.

"Does she live!—does she die?—she languisheth
As a lily drooping to death,
As a drought-worn bird with failing breath,
As a lovely vine without a stay,
As a tree whereof the owner saith,
'Hew it down to-day.'"

Stung by that word, the Prince was fain
To start on his tedious road again.
He crossed the stream where a ford was plain,
He clomb the opposite bank though steep,
And swore to himself to strain and attain
Ere he tasted sleep.

Huge before him a mountain frowned
With foot of rock on the valley ground,
And head with snows incessant crowned,
And a cloud mantle about its strength,
And a path which the wild goat hath not found
In its breadth and length.

But he was strong to do and dare:
If a host had withstood him there,
He had braved a host with little care
In his lusty youth and his pride,
Tough to grapple though weak to snare.
He comes, O Bride.

Up he went where the goat scarce clings,
Up where the eagle folds her wings,
Past the green line of living things,
Where the sun cannot warm the cold,—
Up he went as a flame enrings
Where there seems no hold.

Up a fissure barren and black,
Till the eagles tired upon his track,
And the clouds were left behind his back,
Up till the utmost peak was past:
Then he gasped for breath and his strength fell slack—
He paused at last.

Before his face a valley spread
Where fatness laughed, wine, oil, and bread,
Where all fruit-trees their sweetness shed,
Where all birds made love to their kind,
Where jewels twinkled, and gold lay red
And not hard to find.

Midway down the mountain side
(On its green slope the path was wide)
Stood a house for a royal bride,
Built all of changing opal stone,
The royal palace, till now descried
In his dreams alone.

Less bold than in days of yore,
Doubting now though never before,
Doubting he goes and lags the more:
Is the time late? does the day grow dim?
Rose, will she open the crimson core
Of her heart to him?

Above his head a tangle glows
Of wine-red roses, blushes, snows,
Closed buds and buds that unclose,
Leaves, and moss, and prickles too;
His hand shook as he plucked a rose,
And the rose dropped dew.

Take heart of grace! the potion of Life
May go far to woo him a wife:
If she frown, yet a lover's strife
Lightly raised can be laid again:
A hasty word is never the knife
To cut love in twain.

Far away stretched the royal land,
Fed by dew, by a spice-wind fanned.
Light labor more, and his foot would stand
On the threshold, all labor done;
Easy pleasure laid at his hand,
And the dear Bride won.

His slackening steps pause at the gate—
Does she wake or sleep?—the time is late—
Does she sleep now, or watch and wait?
She has watched, she has waited long,
Watching athwart the golden grate
With a patient song.

Fling the golden portals wide,
The Bridegroom comes to his promised Bride:
Draw the gold-stiff curtains aside,
Let them look on each other's face,
She in her meekness, he in his pride—
Day wears apace.

Day is over, the day that wore.
What is this that comes through the door,
The face covered, the feet before?
This that coming takes his breath;
This Bride not seen, to be seen no more
Save of Bridegroom Death?

Veiled figures carrying her
Sweep by yet make no stir;
There is a smell of spice and myrrh,
A bride-chant burdened with one name;
The bride-song rises steadier
Than the torches' flame:—

"Too late for love, too late for joy,
Too late, too late!
You loitered on the road too long,
You trifled at the gate:
The enchanted dove upon her branch
Died without a mate;
The enchanted princess in her tower
Slept, died, behind the grate;
Her heart was starving all this while
You made it wait.

"Ten years ago, five years ago,
One year ago,
Even then you had arrived in time,
Though somewhat slow;
Then you had known her living face
Which now you cannot know:
The frozen fountain would have leaped,
The buds gone on to blow,
The warm south wind would have awaked
To melt the snow.

"Is she fair now as she lies?
Once she was fair;
Meet queen for any kingly king,
With gold-dust on her hair.
Now these are poppies in her locks,
White poppies she must wear;
Must wear a veil to shroud her face
And the want graven there:
Or is the hunger fed at length,
Cast off the care?

"We never saw her with a smile
Or with a frown;
Her bed seemed never soft to her,
Though tossed of down;
She little heeded what she wore,
Kirtle, or wreath, or gown;
We think her white brows often ached
Beneath her crown,
Till silvery hairs showed in her locks
That used to be so brown.

"We never heard her speak in haste;
Her tones were sweet,
And modulated just so much
As it was meet:
Her heart sat silent through the noise
And concourse of the street.

There was no hurry in her hands,
No hurry in her feet;
There was no bliss drew nigh to her,
That she might run to greet.

"You should have wept her yesterday,
Wasting upon her bed:
But wherefore should you weep to-day
That she is dead?
Lo we who love weep not to-day,
But crown her royal head.
Let be these poppies that we strew,
Your roses are too red:
Let be these poppies, not for you
Cut down and spread."

AMOR MUNDI

(*1865*)

"Oh where are you going with your love-locks flowing,
On the west wind blowing along this valley track?"
"The downhill path is easy, come with me an it please ye,
We shall escape the uphill by never turning back."

So they two went together in glowing August weather,
The honey-breathing heather lay to their left and right;
And dear she was to doat on, her swift feet seemed to float on
The air like soft twin pigeons too sportive to alight.

"Oh what is that in heaven where grey cloud-flakes are seven,
Where blackest clouds hang riven just at the rainy skirt?"
"Oh that's a meteor sent us, a message dumb, portentous,
An undeciphered solemn signal of help or hurt."

"Oh what is that glides quickly where velvet flowers grow thickly,
Their scent comes rich and sickly?" "A scaled and hooded worm."
"Oh what's that in the hollow, so pale I quake to follow?"
"Oh that's a thin dead body which waits the eternal term."

"Turn again, O my sweetest,—turn again, false and fleetest:
This beaten way thou beatest, I fear, is hell's own track."
"Nay, too steep for hill mounting; nay, too late for cost counting:
This downhill path is easy, but there's no turning back."

ITALIA, IO TI SALUTO

(*1865*)

To come back from the sweet South, to the North
Where I was born, bred, look to die;
Come back to do my day's work in its day,
Play out my play—
Amen, amen, say I.

To see no more the country half my own,
Nor hear the half familiar speech,
Amen, I say; I turn to that bleak North
Whence I came forth—
The South lies out of reach.

But when our swallows fly back to the South,
To the sweet South, to the sweet South,
The tears may come again into my eyes
On the old wise,
And the sweet name to my mouth.

THEY DESIRE A BETTER COUNTRY

(*Before 1870*)

I would not if I could undo my past,
Tho' for its sake my future is a blank;
My past for which I have myself to thank,
For all its faults and follies first and last.
I would not cast anew the lot once cast,
Or launch a second ship for one that sank,
Or drug with sweets the bitterness I drank,
Or break by feasting my perpetual fast.
I would not if I could: for much more dear
Is one remembrance than a hundred joys,
More than a thousand hopes in jubilee;
Dearer the music of one tearful voice
That unforgotten calls and calls to me,
"Follow me here, rise up, and follow here."

II

What seekest thou, far in the unknown land?
In hope I follow joy gone on before;
In hope and fear persistent more and more,
As the dry desert lengthens out its sand.
Whilst day and night I carry in my hand
The golden key to ope the golden door
Of golden home; yet mine eye weepeth sore,
For long the journey is that makes no stand.
And who is this that veiled doth walk with thee?
Lo this is Love that walketh at my right;
One exile holds us both, and we are bound
To selfsame home-joys in the land of light.
Weeping thou walkest with him; weepeth he?—
Some sobbing weep, some weep and make no sound.

III

A dimness of a glory glimmers here
Thro' veils and distance from the space remote;
A faintest far vibration of a note
Reaches to us and seems to bring us near;
Causing our face to glow with braver cheer,
Making the serried mist to stand afloat,
Subduing languor with an antidote,
And strengthening love almost to cast out fear:
Till for one moment golden city walls
Rise looming on us, golden walls of home,
Light of our eyes until the darkness falls;
Then thro' the outer darkness burdensome
I hear again the tender voice that calls,
"Follow me hither, follow, rise, and come."

BURY HOPE OUT OF SIGHT

(*Before 1886*)

Bury Hope out of sight,
No book for it and no bell;
It never could bear the light
Even while growing and well:
Think if now it could bear
The light on its face of care
And grey scattered hair.

No grave for Hope in the earth,
But deep in that silent soul
Which rang no bell for its birth
And rings no funeral toll.
Cover its once bright head;
Nor odors nor tears be shed:
It lived once, it is dead.

Brief was the day of its power,
The day of its grace how brief:
As the fading of a flower,
As the falling of a leaf,
So brief its day and its hour;
No bud more and no bower
Or hint of a flower.

Shall many wail it? not so:
Shall one bewail it? not one:
Thus it hath been from long ago,
Thus it shall be beneath the sun.
O fleet sun, make haste to flee;
O rivers, fill up the sea;
O Death, set the dying free.

The sun nor loiters nor speeds,
The rivers run as they ran,
Thro' clouds or thro' windy reeds
All run as when all began.
Only Death turns at our cries:—
Lo the Hope we buried with sighs
Alive in Death's eyes!

MARVEL OF MARVELS

(*Before 1893*)

Marvel of marvels, if I myself shall behold
With mine own eyes my King in His city of gold;
Where the least of lambs is spotless white in the fold,
Where the least and last of saints in spotless white is stoled,
Where the dimmest head beyond a moon is aureoled.
O saints, my belovèd, now mouldering to mould in the mould,
Shall I see you lift your heads, see your cerements unrolled,
See with these very eyes? who now in darkness and cold
Tremble for the midnight cry, the rapture, the tale untold,

"The Bridegroom cometh, cometh, His
Bride to enfold."

Cold it is, my belovèd, since your funeral
bell was tolled:
Cold it is, O my King, how cold alone on
the wold.

YEA, THE SPARROW HATH FOUND HER AN HOUSE

(Before 1893)

Wisest of sparrows that sparrow which
sitteth alone
Perched on the housetop, its own upper
chamber, for nest;

Wisest of swallows that swallow which
timely has flown
Over the turbulent sea to the land of its
rest:
Wisest of sparrows and swallows, if
I were as wise!

Wisest of spirits that spirit which dwell-
eth apart
Hid in the Presence of God for a chapel
and nest,
Sending a wish and a will and a passionate
heart
Over the eddy of life to that Presence
in rest:
Seated alone and in peace till God
bids it arise.

WILLIAM MORRIS (1834–1896)

THE DEFENSE OF GUENEVERE

(1858)

But, knowing now that they would have
her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from
her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her
cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful
blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel ought but
shame
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek
burned so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her
head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last
and said:
"O knights and lords, it seems but little
skill
To talk of well-known things past now and
dead.

"God wot I ought to say, I have done
ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right such great lords
—still

"Listen, suppose your time were come to
die,
And you were quite alone and very weak;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

"The wind was ruffling up the narrow
streak
Of river through your broad lands run-
ning well:
Suppose a hush should come, then some
one speak:

" 'One of these cloths is heaven, and one
is hell,
Now choose one cloth for ever, which they
be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

" 'Of your own strength and mightiness;
here, see!'
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your
eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

"A great God's angel standing, with such
dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings,
and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner
skies

"Showing him well, and making his com-
mands
Seem to be God's commands, moreover,
too,

Holding within his hands the cloths on wands;

"And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red;
No man could tell the better of the two.

"After a shivering half-hour you said,
'God help! heaven's color, the blue'; and he said, 'hell.'
Perhaps you then would roll upon your bed,

"And cry to all good men that loved you well,
'Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known;'
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

"Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie."

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

"It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur's court: at Christmas-time
This happened, when the heralds sung his name,

"'Son of King Ban of Benwick,' seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O'er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme.

"Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea

"And in the Summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down—Autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same,

"However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick,

"To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

"Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold my judges, then the cloths were brought:
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd,

"Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur's great name and his little love.
Must I give up for ever then, I thought,

"That which I deemed would ever round me move
Glorifying all things; for a little word,
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

"Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the Lord

Will that all folks should be quite happy and good?
I love God now a little, if this cord

"Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven.
So day by day it grew, as if one should

"Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping was there some small leaven

"Of stretched hands catching small stones by the way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

"Back, with the hair like sea-weed; yea all past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o'ercast

"In the lone sea, far off from any ships!
Do I not know now of a day in Spring?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

"From out my memory; I hear thrushes sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most fresh sting;

"I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

"I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

"Yea right through to my heart, grown very shy
With weary thoughts, it pierced, and made me glad;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

"A little thing just then had made me mad;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty; if I had

"Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darken'd fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see quite through,

"There, see you, where the soft still light yet lingers,
Round by the edges; what should I have done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted singers,

"And startling green drawn upward by the sun?
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my hair,
And trancedly stood watching the west wind run

"With faintest half-heard breathing sound —why there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;
But shortly listen—In that garden fair

"Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the kiss
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring day,
I scarce dare talk of the remember'd bliss,

"When both our mouths went wandering in one way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
Our hands being left behind strained far away.

"Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before—and now, so nigh!
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

"Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true? A great queen such as I
Having sinn'd this way, straight her conscience sears;

"And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps,—
Gauwaine be friends now, speak me lovingly.

"Do I not see how God's dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in your mouth?
Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,

"Buried in some place far down in the south,
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;
By her head sever'd in that awful drouth

"Of pity that drew Agravaine's fell blow,
I pray your pity! let me not scream out
For ever after, when the shrill winds blow

"Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout
For ever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone! in battle-rout

"Let not my rusting tears make your sword light!
Ah! God of mercy how he turns away!
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

"So—let God's justice work! Gauwaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs: yea all men know
Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one day,

"One bitter day in *la Fausse Garde,* for so
All good knights held it after, saw—
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknightly outrage; though

"You, Gauwaine, held his word without a flaw,
This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my bed—
Whose blood then pray you? is there any law

"To make a queen say why some spots of red
Lie on her coverlet? or will you say,
'Your hands are white, lady, as when you wed,

" 'Where did you bleed?' and must I stammer out—'Nay,
I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend
My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there lay

" 'A knife-point last night': so must I defend
The honor of the lady Guenevere?
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should end

"This very day, and you were judges here
Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce
When Launcelot stood by him? what white fear

"Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance,
His side sink in? as my knight cried and said,
'Slayer of unarm'd men, here is a chance!

" 'Setter of traps, I pray you guard your head,
By God I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels lead

" 'For driving weight; hurrah now! draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so.'

"He struck his hands together o'er the beast,
Who fell down flat, and grovell'd at his feet,
And groan'd at being slain so young—'at least.'

"My knight said, 'Rise you, sir, who are so fleet
At catching ladies, half-arm'd will I fight,
My left side all uncovered!' then I weet,

"Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
Upon his knave's face; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

"Along the lists look to my stake and pen
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

"The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

"And fast leapt caitiff's sword until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it, and swung it; that was all the fight,

"Except a spout of blood on the hot land;
For it was hottest summer; and I know
I wonder'd how the fire, while I should stand,

"And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head; thus these matters went;
Which things were only warnings of the woe

"That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent

"With all this wickedness; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes,
Wept all away to grey, may bring some sword

"To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise,
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

"Yea also at my full heart's strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go up
In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

"The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvellously color'd gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

"And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses: will you dare,
When you have looked a little on my brow,

"To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,
When you can see my face with no lie there

"For ever? am I not a gracious proof—
'But in your chamber Launcelot was found'—
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

"When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:
'O true as steel come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground

" 'Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

" 'The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear
To me in everything, come here to-night,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

" 'If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight;

" 'For no man cares now to know why I sigh;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

" 'So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs
To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

" 'Just for one night.' Did he not come to me?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said 'come'? there was one less than three

"In my quiet room that night, and we were gay;
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,

Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

"I looked at Launcelot's face and could not speak,
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,

"And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile
The stones they threw up rattled o'er my head,
And made me dizzier; till within a while

"My maids were all about me, and my head
On Launcelot's breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said—

"By God! I will not tell you more to-day,
Judge any way you will—what matters it?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

"How Launcelot still'd their bawling, the mad fit
That caught up Gauwaine—all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me; these things flit.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happen'd these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie!

"All I have said is truth, by Christ's dear tears."
She would not speak another word, but stood
Turn'd sideways; listening, like a man who hears

His brother's trumpet sounding through the wood
Of his foes' lances. She lean'd eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger drew all men to see,
The knight who came was Launcelot at good need.

THE CHAPEL IN LYONESS

(1856–1858)

SIR OZANA LE CURE HARDY. SIR GALAHAD. SIR BORS DE GANYS

SIR OZANA

All day long and every day,
From Christmas-Eve to Whit-Sunday,
Within that Chapel-aisle I lay,
And no man came a-near.

Naked to the waist was I,
And deep within my breast did lie,
Though no man any blood could spy,
The truncheon of a spear.

No meat did ever pass my lips.
Those days—(Alas! the sunlight slips
From off the gilded parclose, dips,
And night comes on apace.)

My arms lay back behind my head;
Over my raised-up knees was spread
A samite cloth of white and red;
A rose lay on my face.

Many a time I tried to shout;
But as in dream of battle-rout,
My frozen speech would not well out;
I could not even weep.

With inward sigh I see the sun
Fade off the pillars one by one,
My heart faints when the day is done,
Because I cannot sleep.

Sometimes strange thoughts pass through my head;
Not like a tomb is this my bed,
Yet oft I think that I am dead;
That round my tomb is writ,

"Ozana of the hardy heart,
Knight of the Table Round,
Pray for his soul, lords, of your part;
A true knight he was found."

Ah! me, I cannot fathom it. [*He sleeps.*

SIR GALAHAD

All day long and every day,
Till his madness pass'd away,
I watch'd Ozana as he lay
Within the gilded screen.

All my singing moved him not;
As I sung my heart grew hot,
With the thought of Launcelot
  Far away, I ween.

So I went a little space
From out the chapel, bathed my face
In the stream that runs apace
  By the churchyard wall.

There I pluck'd a faint wild rose,
Hard by where the linden grows
Sighing over silver rows
  Of the lilies tall.

I laid the flower across his mouth;
The sparkling drops seem'd good for drouth;
He smiled, turn'd round toward the south,
  Held up a golden tress.

The light smote on it from the west:
He drew the covering from his breast,
Against his heart that hair he prest;
  Death him soon will bless.

SIR BORS

I enter'd by the western door;
  I saw a knight's helm lying there:
I raised my eyes from off the floor,
  And caught the gleaming of his hair.

I stept full softly up to him;
  I laid my chin upon his head;
I felt him smile; my eyes did swim,
  I was so glad he was not dead.

I heard Ozana murmur low,
  "There comes no sleep nor any love."
But Galahad stoop'd and kiss'd his brow:
  He shiver'd; I saw his pale lips move.

SIR OZANA

There comes no sleep nor any love;
  Ah me! I shiver with delight.
I am so weak I cannot move;
  God move me to thee, dear, to-night!
Christ help! I have but little wit:
My life went wrong; I see it writ,

"Ozana of the hardy heart,
  Knight of the Table Round,
Pray for his soul, lords, on your part;
  A good knight he was found."
Now I begin to fathom it.
  [*He dies.*

SIR BORS

Galahad sits dreamily:
What strange things may his eyes see,
Great blue eyes fix'd full on me?
On his soul, Lord, have mercy.

SIR GALAHAD

Ozana, shall I pray for thee?
  Her cheek is laid to thine;
No long time hence, also I see
  Thy wasted fingers twine

Within the tresses of her hair
  That shineth gloriously,
Thinly outspread in the clear air
  Against the jasper sea.

CONCERNING GEFFRAY TESTE NOIRE

(1858)

And if you meet the Canon of Chimay,
  As going to Ortaise you well may do,
Greet him from John of Castel Neuf, and say,
  All that I tell you, for all this is true.

This Geffray Teste Noire was a Gascon thief,
  Who, under shadow of the English name,
Pilled all such towns and countries as were lief
  To King Charles and St. Dennis; thought it blame

If anything escaped him; so my lord,
  The Duke of Berry, sent Sir John Bonne Lance,
And other knights, good players with the sword,
  To check this thief, and give the land a chance.

Therefore we set our bastides round the tower
  That Geffray held, the strong thief! like a king,
High perch'd upon the rock of Ventadour,
  Hopelessly strong by Christ! it was mid spring,

When first I joined the little army there
With ten good spears; Auvergne is hot, each day
We sweated armed before the barrier,
Good feats of arms were done there often—eh?

Your brother was slain there? I mind me now,
A right good man-at-arms, God pardon him!
I think 'twas Geffray smote him on the brow
With some spiked axe, and while he totter'd, dim

About the eyes, the spear of Alleyne Roux
Slipped through his camaille and his throat; well, well!
Alleyne is paid now; your name Alleyne too?
Mary! how strange—but this tale I would tell—

For spite of all our bastides, damned Blackhead
Would ride abroad whene'er he chose to ride,
We could not stop him; many a burgher bled
Dear gold all around his girdle; far and wide

The villaynes dwelt in utter misery
'Twixt us and thief Sir Geffray; hauled this way
By Sir Bonne Lance at one time, he gone by,
Down comes this Teste Noire on another day.

And therefore they dig up the stone, grind corn,
Hew wood, draw water, yea, they lived, in short,
As I said just now, utterly forlorn,
Till this our knave and blackhead was outfought.

So Bonne Lance fretted, thinking of some trap
Day after day, till on a time he said;
"John of Newcastle, if we have good hap,
We catch our thief in two days."
"How?" I said.

"Why, Sir, to-day he rideth out again,
Hoping to take well certain sumpter mules
From Carcassonne, going with little train,
Because, forsooth, he thinketh us mere fools;

"But if we set an ambush in some wood,
He is but dead; so, Sir, take thirty spears
To Verville forest, if it seem you good."
Then felt I like the horse in Job, who hears

The dancing trumpet sound, and we went forth;
And my red lion on the spear-head flapped,
As faster than the cool wind we rode North,
Towards the wood of Verville; thus it happed.

We rode a soft space on that day while spies
Got news about Sir Geffray; the red wine
Under the road-side bush was clear; the flies,
The dragon-flies I mind me most, did shine

In brighter arms than ever I put on;
So—"Geffray," said our spies, "would pass that way
Next day at sundown"; then he must be won;
And so we enter'd Verville wood next day,

In the afternoon; through it the highway runs,
'Twixt copses of green hazel, very thick,
And underneath, with glimmering of suns,
The primroses are happy; the dews lick

The soft green moss. "Put cloths about your arms
Lest they should glitter; surely they will go
In a long thin line, watchful for alarms,
With all their carriages of booty, so—

"Lay down my pennon in the grass—Lord God!
What have we lying here? will they be cold,
I wonder, being so bare, above the sod,

Instead of under? This was a knight too, fold

"Lying on fold of ancient rusted mail;
No plate at all, gold rowels to the spurs,
And see the quiet gleam of turquoise pale
Along the ceinture; but the long time blurs

"Even the tinder of his coat to nought,
Except these scraps of leather; see how white
The skull is, loose within the coif! He fought
A good fight, maybe, ere he was slain quite.

"No armor on the legs too; strange in faith—
A little skeleton for a knight though—ah!
This one is bigger, truly without scathe
His enemies escaped not—ribs driven out far,—

"That must have reach'd the heart, I doubt —how now,
What say you, Aldovrand—a woman? why?"
"Under the coif a gold wreath on the brow,
Yea, see the hair not gone to powder, lie,

"Golden, no doubt, once—yea, and very small—
This for a knight; but for a dame, my lord,
These loose-hung bones seem shapely still, and tall,—
Didst ever see a woman's bones, my lord?"

Often, God help me! I remember when
I was a simple boy, fifteen years old,
The Jacquerie froze up the blood of men
With their fell deeds, not fit now to be told:

God help again! we enter'd Beauvais town,
Slaying them fast, whereto I help'd, mere boy
As I was then; we gentles cut them down,
These burners and defilers, with great joy.

Reason for that, too, in the great church there

These fiends had lit a fire, that soon went out,
The church at Beauvais being so great and fair—
My father, who was by me, gave a shout

Between a beast's howl and a woman's scream,
Then, panting, chuckled to me: "John, look! look!
Count the dames' skeletons!" From some bad dream
Like a man just awaked, my father shook;

And I, being faint with smelling the burnt bones,
And very hot with fighting down the street,
And sick of such a life, fell down, with groans
My head went weakly nodding to my feet.—

—An arrow had gone through her tender throat,
And her right wrist was broken; then I saw
The reason why she had on that war-coat,
Their story came out clear without a flaw;

For when he knew that they were being waylaid,
He threw it over her, yea, hood and all;
Whereby he was much hack'd, while they were stay'd
By those their murderers; many an one did fall

Beneath his arm, no doubt, so that he clear'd
Their circle, bore his death-wound out of it;
But as they rode, some archer least afear'd
Drew a strong bow, and thereby she was hit.

Still as he rode he knew not she was dead,
Thought her but fainted from her broken wrist,
He bound with his great leathern belt—she bled?
Who knows! he bled too, neither was there miss'd

The beating of her heart, his heart beat well

For both of them, till here, within this wood,
He died scarce sorry; easy this to tell;
After these years the flowers forget their blood.—

How could it be? never before that day,
However much a soldier I might be,
Could I look on a skeleton and say
I care not for it, shudder not—now see,

Over those bones I sat and pored for hours,
And thought, and dream'd, and still I scarce could see
The small white bones that lay upon the flowers,
But evermore I saw the lady; she

With her dear gentle walking leading in,
By a chain of silver twined about her wrists,
Her loving knight, mounted and arm'd to win
Great honor for her, fighting in the lists.

O most pale face, that brings such joy and sorrow
Into men's hearts—yea, too, so piercing sharp
That joy is, that it marcheth nigh to sorrow
For ever—like an overwinded harp.

Your face must hurt me always; pray you now,
Doth it not hurt you too? seemeth some pain
To hold you always, pain to hold your brow
So smooth, unwrinkled ever; yea again,

Your long eyes where the lids seem like to drop,
Would you not, lady, were they shut fast, feel
Far merrier? there so high they will not stop,
They are most sly to glide forth and to steal

Into my heart; *I kiss their soft lids there,*
And in green garden scarce can stop my lips
From wandering on your face, but that your hair
Falls down and tangles me, back my face slips.

Or say your mouth—I saw you drink red wine
Once at a feast: how slowly it sank in,
As though you fear'd that some wild fate might twine
Within that cup, and slay you for a sin.

And when you talk your lips do arch and move
In such wise that a language new I know
Besides their sound; they quiver, too, with love
When you are standing silent; know this, too,

I saw you kissing once, like a curved sword
That bites with all its edge, did your lips lie,
Curled gently, slowly, long time could afford
For caught-up breathings; like a dying sigh

They gather'd up their lines and went away.
And still kept twitching with a sort of smile,
As likely to be weeping presently,—
Your hands too—how I watch'd them all the while!

"Cry out St. Peter now," quoth Aldovrand;
I cried, "St. Peter," broke out from the wood
With all my spears; we met them hand to hand,
And shortly slew them; natheless, by the rood,

We caught not Blackhead then, or any day;
Months after that he died at last in bed,
From a wound pick'd up at a barrier-fray;
That same year's end a steel bolt in the head,

And much bad living kill'd Teste Noire at last;
John Froissart knoweth he is dead by now,
No doubt, but knoweth not this tale just past;
Perchance then you can tell him what I show.

In my new castle, down beside the Eure,
There is a little chapel of squared stone,

Painted inside and out; in green nook pure
There did I lay them, every wearied bone;

And over it they lay, with stone-white hands
Clasped fast together, hair made bright with gold;
This Jacques Picard, known through many lands,
Wrought cunningly; he's dead now—I am old.

THE EVE OF CRECY

(1858)

Gold on her head, and gold on her feet,
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
And a golden girdle round my sweet;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Margaret's maids are fair to see,
Freshly dress'd and pleasantly;
Margaret's hair falls down to her knee;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet;
I would kiss the place where the gold hems meet,
And the golden kirtle round my sweet:
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Ah me! I have never touched her hand;
When the arrière-ban goes through the land,
Six basnets under my pennon stand;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And many an one grins under his hood:
Sir Lambert du Bois, with all his men good,
Has neither food nor firewood;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
And the golden girdle of my sweet,
And thereabouts where the gold hems meet;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Yet even now it is good to think,
While my poor varlets grumble and drink
In my desolate hall, where the fires sink,—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.—

Of Margaret sitting glorious there,
In glory of gold and glory of hair,
And glory of glorious face most fair;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Likewise to-night I make good cheer,
Because this battle draweth near:
For what have I to lose or fear?
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

For, look you, my horse is good to prance
A right fair measure in this war-dance
Before the eyes of Philip of France;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And sometime it may hap, perdie,
While my new towers stand up three and three,
And my hall gets painted fair to see—
Ah! quelle est belle La Marguerite—

That folks may say: Times change, by the rood,
For Lambert, banneret of the wood,
Has heaps of food and firewood;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And wonderful eyes, too, under the hood,
Of a damsel of right noble blood.
St. Ives, for Lambert of the Wood!
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

THE GILLIFLOWER OF GOLD

(1858)

A golden gilliflower to-day
I wore upon my helm alway,
And won the prize of this tourney.
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

However well Sir Giles might sit,
His sun was weak to wither it,
Lord Miles's blood was dew on it:
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Although my spear in splinters flew,
From John's steel-coat my eye was true;
I wheel'd about, and cried for you,
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Yea, do not doubt my heart was good,
Though my sword flew like rotten wood,
To shout, although I scarcely stood,
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

My hand was steady too, to take
My axe from round my neck, and break
John's steel-coat up for my love's sake.
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

When I stood in my tent again,
Arming afresh, I felt a pain
Take hold of me, I was so fain—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

To hear: *"Honneur aux fils des preux!"*
Right in my ears again, and shew
The gilliflower blossom'd new.
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

The Sieur Guillaume against me came,
His tabard bore three points of flame
From a red heart: with little blame—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Our tough spears crackled up like straw;
He was the first to turn and draw
His sword, that had nor speck nor flaw,—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

But I felt weaker than a maid,
And my brain, dizzied and afraid,
Within my helm a fierce tune play'd,—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Until I thought of your dear head,
Bow'd to the gilliflower bed,
The yellow flowers stain'd with red;—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Crash! how the swords met, *"giroflée!"*
The fierce tune in my helm would play,
"La belle! la belle! jaune giroflée!"
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Once more the great swords met again,
"La belle! la belle!" but who fell then?
Le Sieur Guillaume, who struck down ten;—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

And as with mazed and unarm'd face,
Toward my own crown and the Queen's place,
They led me at a gentle pace—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

I almost saw your quiet head
Bow'd o'er the gilliflower bed,
The yellow flowers stain'd with red—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

SHAMEFUL DEATH

(1858)

There were four of us about that bed;
The mass-priest knelt at the side,
I and his mother stood at the head,
Over his feet lay the bride;
We were quite sure that he was dead,
Though his eyes were open wide.

He did not die in the night,
He did not die in the day,
But in the morning twilight
His spirit pass'd away,
When neither sun nor moon was bright,
And the trees were merely grey.

He was not slain with the sword,
Knight's axe, or the knightly spear,
Yet spoke he never a word
After he came in here;
I cut away the cord
From the neck of my brother dear.

He did not strike one blow,
For the recreants came behind,
In a place where the hornbeams grow,
A path right hard to find,
For the hornbeam boughs swing so,
That the twilight makes it blind.

They lighted a great torch then,
When his arms were pinion'd fast,
Sir John the knight of the Fen,
Sir Guy of the Dolorous Blast,
With knights threescore and ten,
Hung brave Lord Hugh at last.

I am threescore and ten,
And my hair is all turn'd grey,
But I met Sir John of the Fen
Long ago on a summer day,
And am glad to think of the moment when
I took his life away.

I am threescore and ten,
And my strength is mostly pass'd,
But long ago I and my men,
When the sky was overcast,
And the smoke roll'd over the reeds of the fen,
Slew Guy of the Dolorous Blast.

And now, knights all of you,
I pray you pray for Sir Hugh,

A good knight and a true,
And for Alice, his wife, pray too.

THE SAILING OF THE SWORD

(1858)

Across the empty garden-beds,
When the Sword went out to sea,
I scarcely saw my sisters' heads
Bowed each beside a tree.
I could not see the castle leads,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Alicia wore a scarlet gown,
When the Sword went out to sea,
But Ursula's was russet brown:
For the mist we could not see
The scarlet roofs of the good town,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Green holly in Alicia's hand,
When the Sword went out to sea.
With sere oak-leaves did Ursula stand;
O! yet alas for me!
I did but bear a peel'd white wand,
When the Sword went out to sea.

O, russet brown and scarlet bright,
When the Sword went out to sea,
My sisters wore; I wore but white:
Red, brown, and white, are three;
Three damozels; each had a knight,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Sir Robert shouted loud, and said,
When the Sword went out to sea,
"Alicia, while I see thy head,
What shall I bring for thee?"
"O, my sweet lord, a ruby red:"
The Sword went out to sea.

Sir Miles said, while the sails hung down,
When the Sword went out to sea,
"Oh, Ursula! while I see the town,
What shall I bring for thee?"
"Dear knight, bring back a falcon brown:"
The Sword went out to sea.

But my Roland, no word he said
When the Sword went out to sea,
But only turn'd away his head,—
A quick shriek came from me:
"Come back, dear lord, to your white maid;"—
The Sword went out to sea.

The hot sun bit the garden-beds,
When the Sword came back from sea;
Beneath an apple-tree our heads
Stretched out toward the sea;
Grey gleam'd the thirsty castle-leads,
When the Sword came back from sea.

Lord Robert brought a ruby red,
When the Sword came back from sea;
He kissed Alicia on the head:
"I am come back to thee;
'Tis time, sweet love, that we were wed,
Now the Sword is back from sea!"

Sir Miles he bore a falcon brown,
When the Sword came back from sea;
His arms went round tall Ursula's gown,—
"What joy, O love, but thee?
Let us be wed in the good town,
Now the Sword is back from sea!"

My heart grew sick, no more afraid,
When the Sword came back from sea;
Upon the deck a tall white maid
Sat on Lord Roland's knee;
His chin was press'd upon her head,
When the Sword came back from sea!

THE WIND

(1858)

Ah! no, no, it is nothing, surely nothing at all,
Only the wild-going wind round by the garden-wall,
For the dawn just now is breaking, the wind beginning to fall.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

So I will sit, and think and think of the days gone by,
Never moving my chair for fear the dogs should cry,
Making no noise at all while the flambeau burns awry.
For my chair is heavy and carved, and with sweeping green behind
It is hung, and the dragons thereon grin out in the gusts of the wind;
On its folds an orange lies, with a deep gash cut in the rind.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?

Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

If I move my chair it will scream, and the orange will roll out far,
And the faint yellow juice ooze out like blood from a wizard's jar;
And the dogs will howl for those who went last month to the war.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

So I will sit and think of love that is over and past,
O! so long ago—yes, I will be quiet at last;
Whether I like it or not, a grim half-slumber is cast
Over my worn old brains, that touches the roots of my heart,
And above my half-shut eyes the blue roof 'gins to part,
And show the blue spring sky, till I am ready to start
From out of the green-hung chair; but something keeps me still,
And I fall in a dream that I walk'd with her on the side of a hill,
Dotted—for was it not spring?—with tufts of the daffodil.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

And Margaret as she walk'd held a painted book in her hand;
Her finger kept the place; I caught her, we both did stand
Face to face, on the top of the highest hill in the land.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

I held to her long bare arms, but she shudder'd away from me,
While the flush went out of her face as her head fell back on a tree,
And a spasm caught her mouth, fearful for me to see;
And still I held to her arms till her shoulder touch'd my mail,
Weeping she totter'd forward, so glad that I should prevail,
And her hair went over my robe, like a gold flag over a sail.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

I kiss'd her hard by the ear, and she kiss'd me on the brow,
And then lay down on the grass, where the mark on the moss is now,
And spread her arms out wide while I went down below.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind! unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

And then I walk'd for a space to and fro on the side of the hill,
Till I gather'd and held in my arms great sheaves of the daffodil,
And when I came again my Margaret lay there still.

I piled them high and high above her heaving breast,
How they were caught and held in her loose ungirded vest!
But one beneath her arm died, happy so to be prest!
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind! unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

Again I turn'd my back and went away for an hour;
She said no word when I came again, so, flower by flower,
I counted the daffodils over, and cast them languidly lower.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind! unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

My dry hands shook and shook as the green gown show'd again,
Clear'd from the yellow flowers, and I grew hollow with pain,
And on to us both there fell from the sun-shower drops of rain.

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

Alas! alas! there was blood on the very quiet breast,
Blood lay in the many folds of the loose ungirded vest,
Blood lay upon her arm where the flower had been prest.

I shriek'd and leapt from my chair, and the orange roll'd out far,
The faint yellow juice oozed out like blood from a wizard's jar;
And then in march'd the ghosts of those that had gone to the war.

I knew them by the arms that I was used to paint
Upon their long thin shields; but the colors were all grown faint,
And faint upon their banner was Olaf, king and saint.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

√ THE BLUE CLOSET

(1858)

The Damozels

Lady Alice, Lady Louise,
Between the wash of the tumbling seas
We are ready to sing, if so ye please;
So lay your long hands on the keys;
Sing, *"Laudate pueri."*

And ever the great bell overhead
Boom'd in the wind a knell for the dead,
Though no one toll'd it, a knell for the dead.

Lady Louise

Sister, let the measure swell
Not too loud; for you sing not well
If you drown the faint boom of the bell;
He is weary, so am I.

And ever the chevron overhead
Flapp'd on the banner of the dead;
(Was he asleep, or was he dead?)

Lady Alice

Alice the Queen, and Louise the Queen,
Two damozels wearing purple and green,
Four lone ladies dwelling here
From day to day and year to year;
And there is none to let us go;
To break the locks of the doors below,
Or shovel away the heaped-up snow;
And when we die no man will know
That we are dead; but they give us leave,
Once every year on Christmas-eve,
To sing in the Closet Blue one song;
And we should be so long, so long,
If we dared, in singing; for dream on dream,
They float on in a happy stream;
Float from the gold strings, float from the keys,
Float from the open'd lips of Louise;
But, alas! the sea-salt oozes through
The chinks of the tiles of the Closet Blue;
And ever the great bell overhead
Booms in the wind a knell for the dead,
The wind plays on it a knell for the dead.

[They sing all together]

How long ago was it, how long ago,
He came to this tower with hands full of snow?
"Kneel down, O love Louise, kneel down," he said,
And sprinkled the dusty snow over my head.

He watch'd the snow melting, it ran through my hair,
Ran over my shoulders, white shoulders and bare.

"I cannot weep for thee, poor love Louise,
For my tears are all hidden deep under the seas;

"In a gold and blue casket she keeps all my tears,
But my eyes are no longer blue, as in old years;

"Yea, they grow grey with time, grow small and dry,
I am so feeble now, would I might die."

And in truth the great bell overhead
Left off his pealing for the dead,
Perchance, because the wind was dead.

Will he come back again, or is he dead?
O! is he sleeping, my scarf round his head?

Or did they strangle him as he lay there,
With the long scarlet scarf I used to wear?

Only I pray thee, Lord, let him come here!
Both his soul and his body to me are most dear.

Dear Lord, that loves me, I wait to receive
Either body or spirit this wild Christmas-eve.

Through the floor shot up a lily red,
With a patch of earth from the land of the dead,
For he was strong in the land of the dead.

What matter that his cheeks were pale,
His kind kiss'd lips all grey?
"O, love Louise, have you waited long?"
"O, my love Arthur, yea."

What if his hair that brush'd her cheek
Was stiff with frozen rime?
His eyes were grown quite blue again,
As in the happy time.

"O, love Louise, this is the key
Of the happy golden land!
O, sisters, cross the bridge with me,
My eyes are full of sand,
What matter that I cannot see,
If ye take me by the hand?"

And ever the great bell overhead,
And the tumbling seas mourn'd for the dead;
For their song ceased, and they were dead.

THE TUNE OF SEVEN TOWERS

(1858)

No one goes there now:
For what is left to fetch away
From the desolate battlements all arow,
And the lead roof heavy and grey?
"Therefore," said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

No one walks there now;
Except in the white moonlight
The white ghosts walk in a row;
If one could see it, an awful sight,—
"Listen!" said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

But none can see them now,
Though they sit by the side of the moat,
Feet half in the water, there in a row,
Long hair in the wind afloat.
"Therefore," said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

If any will go to it now,
He must go to it all alone,
Its gates will not open to any row
Of glittering spears—will *you* go alone?
"Listen!" said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

By my love go there now,
To fetch me my coif away,
My coif and my kirtle, with pearls arow,
Oliver, go to-day!
"Therefore," said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

I am unhappy now,
I cannot tell you why;
If you go, the priests and I in a row
Will pray that you may not die.
"Listen!" said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

If you will go for me now,
I will kiss your mouth at last;
[*She sayeth inwardly.*]
(*The graves stand grey in a row,*)
Oliver, hold me fast!
"Therefore," said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS

(1858)

Had she come all the way for this,
To part at last without a kiss?
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain
That her own eyes might see him slain
Beside the haystack in the floods?

Along the dripping leafless woods,
The stirrup touching either shoe,
She rode astride as troopers do;
With kirtle kilted to her knee,
To which the mud splash'd wretchedly;

And the wet dripp'd from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair;
The tears and rain ran down her face.
By fits and starts they rode apace,
And very often was his place
Far off from her; he had to ride
Ahead, to see what might betide
When the roads cross'd; and sometimes, when
There rose a murmuring from his men,
Had to turn back with promises;
Ah me! she had but little ease;
And often for pure doubt and dread
She sobb'd, made giddy in the head
By the swift riding; while, for cold,
Her slender fingers scarce could hold
The wet reins; yea, and scarcely, too,
She felt the foot within her shoe
Against the stirrup: all for this,
To part at last without a kiss
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they near'd that old soak'd hay,
They saw across the only way
That Judas, Godmar, and the three
Red running lions dismally
Grinn'd from his pennon, under which
In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads.
So then,
While Robert turn'd round to his men,
She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,
And hid her eyes; while Robert said:
"Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one,
At Poictiers where we made them run
So fast—why, sweet my love, good cheer.
The Gascon frontier is so near,
Nought after this."

But, "O," she said,
"My God! My God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the Chatelet;
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last,
Would God that this next hour were past!"

He answer'd not, but cried his cry,
"St. George for Marny!" cheerily;
And laid his hand upon her rein.

Alas! No man of all his train
Gave back that cheery cry again;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilts, some one cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.

Then they went along
To Godmar; who said: "Now, Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off—
Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and scoff,
Sir Robert, or I slay you now."

She laid her hand upon her brow,
Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and—"No."
She said, and turn'd her head away,
As there were nothing else to say,
And everything were settled: red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:
"Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands:
What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do
To your fair wilful body, while
Your knight lies dead?"
A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:
"You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God's help—ah!" she said,
"Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in,
I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens: yet I think
They could not make me eat or drink,
And so should I just reach my rest."
"Nay, if you do not my behest,
O Jehane! though I love you well,"
Said Godmar, "would I fail to tell
All that I know." "Foul lies," she said.
"Eh? lies my Jehane? by God's head,
At Paris folks would deem them true!
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you,
'Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!'—
Eh—gag me Robert!—sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet;
An end that few men would forget

That saw it—So, an hour yet:
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death!"

So, scarce awake,
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards: with her face
Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And fell asleep: and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept
Round to the twelve again; but she,
Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,
And strangely childlike came, and said:
"I will not." Straightway Godmar's head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd
Most sharply round, and his face burn'd.

For Robert—both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep, but gloomily
He seem'd to watch the rain; yea, too,
His lips were firm; he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reach'd out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor grey lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brush'd them.

With a start
Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;
From Robert's throat he loosed the bands
Of silk and mail; with empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head, she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moan'd as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.

Then Godmar turn'd again and said:
"So, Jehane, the first fitte is read!
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet!"
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
As though this thing had made her mad.

This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

TWO RED ROSES ACROSS THE MOON

(1858)

There was a lady lived in a hall,
Large in the eyes, and slim and tall;
And ever she sung from noon to noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

There was a knight came riding by
In early spring, when the roads were dry;
And he heard that lady sing at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Yet none the more he stopp'd at all,
But he rode a-gallop past the hall;
And left that lady singing at noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Because, forsooth, the battle was set,
And the scarlet and blue had got to be met,
He rode on the spur till the next warm noon:—
Two red roses across the moon.

But the battle was scatter'd from hill to hill,
From the windmill to the watermill;
And he said to himself, as it near'd the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

You scarce could see for the scarlet and blue,
A golden helm or a golden shoe;
So he cried, as the fight grew thick at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon!

Verily then the gold bore through
The huddled spears of the scarlet and blue;
And they cried, as they cut them down at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon!

I trow he stopp'd when he rode again
By the hall, though draggled sore with the rain;
And his lips were pinch'd to kiss at the noon
Two red roses across the moon.

Under the may she stoop'd to the crown,
All was gold, there was nothing of brown;

And the horns blew up in the hall at noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

IN PRISON

(1858)

Wearily, drearily,
Half the day long,
Flap the great banners
High over the stone;
Strangely and eerily
Sounds the wind's song,
Bending the banner-poles.

While all alone,
Watching the loophole's spark,
Lie I, with life all dark,
Feet tether'd, hands fetter'd
Fast to the stone,
The grim wall, square letter'd
With prison'd men's groan.

Still strain the banner-poles
Through the wind's song,
Westward the banner rolls
Over my wrong.

I KNOW A LITTLE GARDEN CLOSE

(1867)

I know a little garden close
Set thick with lily and red rose,
Where I would wander if I might
From dewy dawn to dewy night,
And have one with me wandering.
And though within it no birds sing,
And though no pillared house is there,
And though the apple boughs are bare
Of fruit and blossom, would to God,
Her feet upon the green grass trod,
And I beheld them as before.
There comes a murmur from the shore,
And in the place two fair streams are,
Drawn from the purple hills afar,
Drawn down unto the restless sea;
The hills whose flowers ne'er fed the bee,
The shore no ship has ever seen,
Still beaten by the billows green,
Whose murmur comes unceasingly
Unto the place for which I cry.
For which I cry both day and night,
For which I let slip all delight,
That maketh me both deaf and blind,
Careless to win, unskilled to find,
And quick to lose what all men seek.
Yet tottering as I am, and weak,
Still have I left a little breath
To seek within the jaws of death
An entrance to that happy place,
To seek the unforgotten face
Once seen, once kissed, once reft from me
Anigh the murmuring of the sea.

From "THE EARTHLY PARADISE"

(1868–1870)

Through many changes had the May-tide passed,
The hope of summer oft had been o'ercast,
Ere midst the gardens they once more were met;
But now the full-leaved trees might well forget
The changeful agony of doubtful spring,
For summer pregnant with so many a thing
Was at the door; right hot had been the day
Which they amid the trees had passed away,
And now betwixt the tulip-beds they went
Unto the hall, and thoughts of days long spent
Gathered about them, as some blossom's smell
Unto their hearts familiar tales did tell.
But when they well were settled in the hall,
And now behind the trees the sun 'gan fall,
And they as yet no history had heard,
Laurence, the Swabian priest, took up the word,
And said, "Ye know from what has gone before,
That in my youth I followed mystic lore,
And many books I read in seeking it,
And through my memory this same eve doth flit
A certain tale I found in one of these,
Long ere mine eyes had looked upon the seas;
It made me shudder in the times gone by,
When I believed in many a mystery
I thought divine, that now I think, forsooth,
Men's own fears made, to fill the place of truth

Within their foolish hearts; short is the tale,
And therefore will the better now avail
To fill the space before the night comes on,
And unto rest once more the world is won.

THE WRITING ON THE IMAGE

ARGUMENT

How on an Image that stood anciently in Rome were written certain words, which none understood, until a scholar, coming there, knew their meaning, and thereby discovered great marvels, but withal died miserably.

In half-forgotten days of old,
As by our fathers we were told,
Within the town of Rome there stood
An image cut of cornel-wood,
And on the upraised hand of it
Men might behold these letters writ—
"PERCUTE HIC": which is to say,
In that tongue that we speak to-day,
"Strike here!" nor yet did any know
The cause why this was written so.

Thus in the middle of the square,
In the hot sun and summer air,
The snow-drift and the driving rain,
That image stood, with little pain,
For twice a hundred years and ten;
While many a band of striving men
Were driven betwixt woe and mirth
Swiftly across the weary earth,
From nothing unto dark nothing:
And many an Emperor and King,
Passing with glory or with shame,
Left little record of his name,
And no remembrance of the face
Once watched with awe for gifts or grace.
Fear little, then, I counsel you,
What any son of man can do;
Because a log of wood will last
While many a life of man goes past,
And all is over in short space.

Now so it chanced that to this place
There came a man of Sicily,
Who, when the image he did see,
Knew full well who, in days of yore,
Had set it there; for much strange lore,
In Egypt and in Babylon,
This man with painful toil had won;
And many secret things could do;
So verily full well he knew
That master of all sorcery
Who wrought the thing in days gone by,
And doubted not that some great spell
It guarded, but could nowise tell
What it might be. So, day by day,
Still would he loiter on the way,
And watch the image carefully,
Well mocked of many a passer-by.
And on a day he stood and gazed
Upon the slender finger, raised
Against a doubtful cloudy sky,
Nigh noontide; and thought, "Certainly
The master who made thee so fair
By wondrous art, had not stopped there,
But made thee speak, had he not thought
That thereby evil might be brought
Upon his spell." But as he spoke,
From out a cloud the noon sun broke
With watery light, and shadows cold:
Then did the Scholar well behold
How, from that finger carved to tell
Those words, a short black shadow fell
Upon a certain spot of ground,
And thereon, looking all around
And seeing none heeding, went straightway
Whereas the finger's shadow lay,
And with his knife about the place
A little circle did he trace;
Then home he turned with throbbing head,
And forthright gat him to his bed,
And slept until the night was late
And few men stirred from gate to gate.
So when at midnight he did wake,
Pickaxe and shovel did he take,
And, going to that now silent square,
He found the mark his knife made there,
And quietly with many a stroke
The pavement of the place he broke:
And so, the stones being set apart,
He 'gan to dig with beating heart,
And from the hole in haste he cast
The marl and gravel; till at last,
Full shoulder high, his arms were jarred,
For suddenly his spade struck hard
With clang against some metal thing:
And soon he found a brazen ring,
All green with rust, twisted, and great
As a man's wrist, set in a plate
Of copper, wrought all curiously
With words unknown though plain to see
Spite of the rust; and flowering trees,
And beasts, and wicked images,
Whereat he shuddered; for he knew
What ill things he might come to do,
If he should still take part with these
And that Great Master strive to please.

But small time had he then to stand
And think, so straight he set his hand
Unto the ring, but where he thought
That by main strength it must be brought
From out its place, lo! easily
It came away, and let him see
A winding staircase wrought of stone,
Wherethrough the new-come wind did moan.

Then thought he, "If I come alive
From out this place well shall I thrive,
For I may look here certainly
The treasures of a king to see,
A mightier man than men are now.
So in few days what man shall know
The needy Scholar, seeing me
Great in the place where great men be,
The richest man in all the land?
Beside the best then shall I stand,
And some unheard-of palace have;
And if my soul I may not save
In heaven, yet here in all men's eyes
Will I make some sweet paradise,
With marble cloisters, and with trees
And bubbling wells, and fantasies,
And things all men deem strange and rare,
And crowds of women kind and fair,
That I may see, if so I please,
Laid on the flowers, or mid the trees
With half-clad bodies wandering.
There, dwelling happier than the King,
What lovely days may yet be mine!
How shall I live with love and wine,
And music, till I come to die!
And then—Who knoweth certainly
What haps to us when we are dead?
Truly I think by likelihead
Naught haps to us of good or bad;
Therefore on earth will I be glad
A short space, free from hope or fear;
And fearless will I enter here
And meet my fate, whatso it be."

Now on his back a bag had he,
To bear what treasure he might win,
And therewith now did he begin
To go adown the winding stair;
And found the walls all painted fair
With images of many a thing,
Warrior and priest, and queen and king,
But nothing knew what they might be.
Which things full clearly could he see,
For lamps were hung up here and there
Of strange device, but wrought right fair,
And pleasant savor came from them.
At last a curtain, on whose hem
Unknown words in red gold were writ,
He reached, and softly raising it
Stepped back, for now did he behold
A goodly hall hung round with gold,
And at the upper end could see
Sitting, a glorious company:
Therefore he trembled, thinking well
They were no men, but fiends of hell.
But while he waited, trembling sore,
And doubtful of his late-learned lore,
A cold blast of the outer air
Blew out the lamps upon the stair
And all was dark behind him; then
Did he fear less to face those men
Than, turning round, to leave them there
While he went groping up the stair.
Yea, since he heard no cry or call
Or any speech from them at all,
He doubted they were images
Set there some dying king to please
By that Great Master of the art;
Therefore at last with stouter heart
He raised the cloth and entered in
In hope that happy life to win,
And drawing nigher did behold
That these were bodies dead and cold
Attired in full royal guise,
And wrought by art in such a wise
That living they all seemed to be,
Whose very eyes he well could see,
That now beheld not foul or fair,
Shining as though alive they were.
And midmost of that company
An ancient king that man could see,
A mighty man, whose beard of gray
A foot over his gold gown lay;
And next beside him sat his queen
Who in a flowery gown of green
And golden mantle well was clad,
And on her neck a collar had
Too heavy for her dainty breast;
Her loins by such a belt were pressed
That whoso in his treasury
Held that alone, a king might be.
On either side of these, a lord
Stood heedfully before the board,
And in their hands held bread and wine
For service; behind these did shine
The armor of the guards, and then
The well-attired serving-men,
The minstrels clad in raiment meet;
And over against the royal seat
Was hung a lamp, although no flame
Was burning there, but there was set
Within its open golden fret
A huge carbuncle, red and bright;
Wherefrom there shone forth such a light
That great hall was as clear by it,

As though by wax it had been lit,
As some great church at Easter-time.
Now set a little way aside,
Six paces from the daïs stood
An image made of brass and wood,
In likeness of a full-armed knight
Who pointed 'gainst the ruddy-light
A huge shaft ready in a bow.
Pondering how he could come to know
What all these marvellous matters meant,
About the hall the Scholar went,
Trembling, though nothing moved as yet;
And for a while did he forget
The longings that had brought him there
In wondering at these marvels fair;
And still for fear he doubted much
One jewel of their robes to touch.

But as about the hall he passed
He grew more used to them at last,
And thought, "Swiftly the time goes by,
And now no doubt the day draws nigh.
Folk will be stirring; by my head
A fool I am to fear the dead,
Who have seen living things enow,
Whose very names no man can know,
Whose shapes brave men might well affright
More than the lion in the night
Wandering for food"; therewith he drew
Unto those royal corpses two,
That on dead brows still wore the crown;
And midst the golden cups set down
The rugged wallet from his back,
Patched of strong leather, brown and black.
Then, opening wide its mouth, took up
From off the board, a golden cup
The King's dead hand was laid upon,
Whose unmoved eyes upon him shone
And recked no more of that last shame
Than if he were the beggar lame,
Who in old days was wont to wait
For a dog's meal beside the gate.
Of which shame naught our man did reck,
But laid his hand upon the neck
Of the slim Queen, and thence undid
The jewelled collar, that straight slid
Down her smooth bosom to the board.
And when these matters he had stored
Safe in his sack, with both their crowns,
The jewelled parts of their rich gowns,
Their shoes and belts, brooches and rings,
And cleared the board of all rich things,
He staggered with them down the hall.

But as he went his eyes did fall
Upon a wonderful green stone,
Upon the hall-floor laid alone;
He said, "Though thou art not so great
To add by much unto the weight
Of this my sack indeed, yet thou,
Certes, would make me rich enow,
That verily with thee I might
Wage one half of the world to fight
The other half of it, and I
The lord of all the world might die;—
I will not leave thee"; therewithal
He knelt down midmost of the hall,
Thinking it would come easily
Into his hand; but when that he
Gat hold of it, full fast it stack,
So fuming, down he laid his sack,
And with both hands pulled lustily,
But as he strained, he cast his eye
Unto the daïs, and saw there
The image who the great bow bare
Moving the bowstring to his ear,
So, shrieking out aloud for fear,
Of that rich stone he loosed his hold
And catching up his bag of gold,
Gat to his feet: but ere he stood,
The evil thing of brass and wood
Up to his ear the notches drew;
And clanging forth the arrow flew,
And midmost of the carbuncle
Clanging again, the forked barbs fell,
And all was dark as pitch straightway.

So there until the judgment day
Shall come and find his bones laid low,
And raise them up for weal or woe,
This man must bide; cast down he lay
While all his past life day by day
In one short moment he could see
Laid out before him, while that he
In terror by that fatal stone
Was laid, and scarcely dared to moan.
But in a while his hope returned,
And then, though nothing he discerned,
He gat him up upon his feet,
And all about the walls he beat
To find some token of the door,
But never could he find it more,
For by some dreadful sorcery
All was sealed close as it might be,
And midst the marvels of that hall
This Scholar found the end of all.

But in the town on that same night,
An hour before the dawn of light,
Such storm upon the place there fell,
That not the oldest man could tell
Of such another: and thereby

The image was burnt utterly,
Being stricken from the clouds above;
And folk deemed that same bolt did move
The pavement where that wretched one
Unto his foredoomed fate had gone,
Because the plate was set again
Into its place, and the great rain
Washed the earth down, and sorcery
Had hid the place where it did lie.
So soon the stones were set all straight,
But yet the folk, afraid of fate,
Where once the man of cornel-wood
Through many a year of bad and good
Had kept his place, set up alone
Great Jove himself, cut in white stone,
But thickly overlaid with gold.
"Which," saith my tale, "you may behold
Unto this day, although indeed
Some lord or other, being in need,
Took every ounce of gold away."
But now, this tale in some past day
Being writ, I warrant all is gone,
Both gold and weather-beaten stone.

Be merry, masters, while ye may,
For men much quicker pass away.

They praised the tale, and for awhile they talked
Of other tales of treasure-seekers balked,
And shame and loss for men insatiate stored,
Nitocris' tomb, the Niflungs' fatal hoard,
The serpent-guarded treasures of the dead;
Then of how men would be remembered
When they are gone; and more than one could tell
Of what unhappy things therefrom befell;
Or how by folly men have gained a name—
A name indeed, not hallowed by the fame
Of any deeds remembered; and some thought,
"Strange hopes and fears for what shall be but naught
To dead men! better it would be to give
What things they may, while on the earth they live
Unto the earth, and from the bounteous earth
To take their pay of sorrow or of mirth,
Hatred or love, and get them on their way;
And let the teeming earth fresh troubles make
For other men, and ever for their sake
Use what they left, when they are gone from it."

But while amid such musings they did sit,
Dark night being come, men lighted up the hall,
And the chief man for minstrelsy did call,
And other talk their dull thoughts chased away,
Nor did they part till night was mixed with day.

JUNE

June drew unto its end, the hot bright days
Now gat from men as much of blame as praise,
As rainless still they passed, without a cloud,
And growing gray at last, the barley bowed
Before the southeast wind. On such a day
These folk amid the trellised roses lay,
And careless for a little while at least,
Crowned with the mingled blossoms, held their feast:
Nor did the garden lack for younger folk,
Who cared no more for burning summer's yoke
Than the sweet breezes of the April-tide;
But through the thick trees wandered far and wide
From sun to shade, and shade to sun again,
Until they deemed the elders would be fain
To hear the tale, and shadows longer grew:
Then round about the grave old men they drew,
Both youths and maidens; and beneath their feet
The grass seemed greener, and the flowers more sweet
Unto the elders, as they stood around.

So through the calm air soon arose the sound
Of one old voice as now a Wanderer spoke.
"O friends, and ye, fair loving gentle folk,
Would I could better tell a tale to-day;
But hark to this, which while our good ship lay
Within the Weser such a while agone,
A Fleming told me, as we sat alone
One Sunday evening in the Rose-garland,
And all the other folk were gone a-land

After their pleasure, like seafaring men.
Surely I deem it no great wonder then
That I remember everything he said,
Since from that Sunday eve strange fortune led
That keel and me on such a weary way—
Well, at the least it serveth you to-day."

THE LADY OF THE LAND

ARGUMENT

A certain Man having landed on an island in the Greek Sea, found there a beautiful damsel, whom he would fain have delivered from a strange and dreadful doom, but failing herein, he died soon afterwards.

It happened once, some men of Italy
Midst the Greek islands went a sea-roving,
And much good fortune had they on the sea:
Of many a man they had the ransoming,
And many a chain they gat, and goodly thing;
And midst their voyage to an isle they came,
Whereof my story keepeth not the name.

Now though but little was there left to gain,
Because the richer folk had gone away,
Yet since by this of water they were fain
They came to anchor in a land-locked bay,
Whence in a while some went ashore to play,
Going but lightly armed in twos or threes,
For midst that folk they feared no enemies.

And of these fellows that thus went ashore,
One was there who left all his friends behind;
Who going inland ever more and more,
And being left quite alone, at last did find
A lonely valley sheltered from the wind,
Wherein, amidst an ancient cypress wood,
A long-deserted castle stood.

The wood, once ordered in fair grove and glade,
With gardens overlooked by terraces,
And marble-pavèd pools for pleasure made,
Was tangled now, and choked with fallen trees;
And he who went there, with but little ease
Must stumble by the stream's side, once made meet
For tender women's dainty wandering feet.

The raven's croak, the low wind choked and drear,
The baffled stream, the gray wolf's doleful cry,
Were all the sounds that mariner could hear,
As through the wood he wandered painfully;
But as unto the house he drew anigh,
The pillars of a ruined shrine he saw,
The once fair temple of a fallen law.

No image was there left behind to tell
Before whose face the knees of men had bowed;
An altar of black stone, of old wrought well,
Alone beneath a ruined roof now showed
The goal whereto the folk were wont to crowd,
Seeking for things forgotten long ago,
Praying for heads long ages laid a-low.

Close to the temple was the castle-gate,
Doorless and crumbling; there our fellow turned,
Trembling indeed at what might chance to wait
The prey entrapped, yet with a heart that burned
To know the most of what might there be learned,
And hoping somewhat too, amid his fear,
To light on such things as all men hold dear.

Noble the house was, nor seemed built for war,
But rather like the work of other days,
When men, in better peace than now they are,
Had leisure on the world around to gaze,
And noted well the past times' changing ways;
And fair with sculptured stories it was wrought,
By lapse of time unto dim ruin brought.

Now as he looked about on all these things,
And strove to read the mouldering histories,
Above the door an image with wide wings,
Whose unclad limbs a serpent seemed to seize,
He dimly saw, although the western breeze,
And years of biting frost and biting rain,
Had made the carver's labor wellnigh vain.

But this, though perished sore and worn away,
He noted well, because it seemed to be
After the fashion of another day,
Some great man's badge of war or armory,
And round it a carved wreath he seemed to see:
But taking note of these things, at the last
The mariner beneath the gateway passed.

And there a lovely cloistered court he found,
A fountain in the midst o'erthrown and dry,
And in the cloister briers twining round
The slender shafts; the wondrous imagery
Outworn by more than many years gone by,
Because the country people, in their fear
Of wizardry, had wrought destruction here;

And piteously these fair things had been maimed;
There stood great Jove lacking his head of might;
Here was the archer, swift Apollo, lamed;
The shapely limbs of Venus hid from sight
By weeds and shards; Diana's ankles light
Bound with the cable of some coasting ship;
And rusty nails through Helen's maddening lip.

Therefrom unto the chambers did he pass,
And found them fair still, midst of their decay,
Though in them now no sign of man there was,
And everything but stone had passed away
That made them lovely in that vanished day;
Nay, the mere walls themselves would soon be gone,
And naught be left but heaps of mouldering stone.

But he, when all the place he had gone o'er,
And with much trouble clomb the broken stair,
And from the topmost turret seen the shore
And his good ship drawn up at anchor there,
Came down again, and found a crypt most fair
Built wonderfully beneath the greatest hall,
And there he saw a door within the wall,

Well-hinged, close-shut; nor was there in that place
Another on its hinges, therefore he
Stood there and pondered for a little space,
And thought, "Perchance some marvel I shall see,
For surely here some dweller there must be,
Because this door seems whole, and new, and sound,
While naught but ruin I can see around."

So with that word, moved by a strong desire,
He tried the hasp, that yielded to his hand,
And in a strange place, lit as by a fire
Unseen but near, he presently did stand;
And by an odorous breeze his face was fanned,
As though in some Arabian plain he stood,
Anigh the border of a spice-tree wood.

He moved not for a while, but looking round,
He wondered much to see the place so fair,
Because, unlike the castle above ground,
No pillager or wrecker had been there;
It seemed that time had passed on otherwhere,
Nor laid a finger on this hidden place,
Rich with the wealth of some forgotten race.

With hangings, fresh as when they left the loom,

The walls were hung a space above the head,
Slim ivory chairs were set about the room,
And in one corner was a dainty bed,
That seemed for some fair queen apparellèd,
And marble was the worst stone of the floor,
That with rich Indian webs was covered o'er.

The wanderer trembled when he saw all this,
Because he deemed by magic it was wrought;
Yet in his heart a longing for some bliss,
Whereof the hard and changing world knows naught,
Arose and urged him on, and dimmed the thought
That there perchance some devil lurked to slay
The heedless wanderer from the light of day.

Over against him was another door
Set in the wall, so, casting fear aside,
With hurried steps he crossed the varied floor,
And there again the silver latch he tried
And with no pain the door he opened wide,
And entering the new chamber cautiously
The glory of great heaps of gold could see.

Upon the floor uncounted medals lay,
Like things of little value; here and there
Stood golden caldrons, that might well outweigh
The biggest midst an emperor's copper ware,
And golden cups were set on tables fair,
Themselves of gold; and in all hollow things
Were stored great gems, worthy the crowns of kings.

The walls and roof with gold were overlaid,
And precious raiment from the wall hung down;
The fall of kings that treasure might have stayed,
Or gained some longing conqueror great renown,
Or built again some god-destroyed old town;
What wonder, if this plunderer of the sea
Stood gazing at it long and dizzily?

But at the last his troubled eyes and dazed
He lifted from the glory of that gold,
And then the image, that wellnigh erased
Over the castle-gate he did behold,
Above a door well-wrought in colored gold
Again he saw; a naked girl with wings
Enfolded in a serpent's scaly rings.

And even as his eyes were fixed on it
A woman's voice came from the other side,
And through his heart strange hopes began to flit
That in some wondrous land he might abide
Not dying, master of a deathless bride,
So o'er the gold, he scarcely now could see,
He went, and passed this last door eagerly.

Then in a room he stood wherein there was
A marble bath, whose brimming water yet
Was scarcely still; a vessel of green glass
Half-full of odorous ointment was there set
Upon the topmost step that still was wet,
And jewelled shoes and women's dainty gear
Lay cast upon the varied pavement near.

In one quick glance these things his eyes did see,
But speedily they turned round to behold
Another sight, for throned on ivory
There sat a girl, whose dripping tresses rolled
On to the floor in waves of gleaming gold,
Cast back from such a form as, erewhile shown
To one poor shepherd, lighted up Troy town.

Naked she was, the kisses of her feet
Upon the floor a dying path had made
From the full bath unto her ivory seat;
In her right hand, upon her bosom laid,
She held a golden comb, a mirror weighed
Her left hand down, aback her fair head lay
Dreaming awake of some long vanished day.

Her eyes were shut, but she seemed not to sleep,
Her lips were murmuring things unheard and low,
Or sometimes twitched as though she needs must weep
Though from her eyes the tears refused to flow,
And oft with heavenly red her cheek did glow,
As if remembrance of some half-sweet shame
Across the web of many memories came.

There stood the man, scarce daring to draw breath
For fear the lovely sight should fade away;
Forgetting heaven, forgetting life and death,
Trembling for fear lest something he should say
Unwitting, lest some sob should yet betray
His presence there, for to his eager eyes
Already did the tears begin to rise.

But as he gazed she moved, and with a sigh
Bent forward, dropping down her golden head;
"Alas, alas! another day gone by,
Another day and no soul come," she said;
"Another year, and still I am not dead!"
And with that word once more her head she raised,
And on the trembling man with great eyes gazed.

Then he imploring hands to her did reach,
And toward her very slowly 'gan to move
And with wet eyes her pity did beseech,
And, seeing her about to speak, he strove
From trembling lips to utter words of love;
But with a look she stayed his doubtful feet,
And made sweet music as their eyes did meet.

For now she spoke in gentle voice and clear,
Using the Greek tongue that he knew full well;
"What man art thou, that thus has wandered here,
And found this lonely chamber where I dwell?
Beware, beware! for I have many a spell;
If greed of power and gold have led thee on,
Not lightly shall this untold wealth be won.

"But if thou com'st here, knowing of my tale,
In hope to bear away my body fair,
Stout must thine heart be, nor shall that avail
If thou a wicked heart in thee dost bear;
So once again I bid thee to beware,
Because no base man things like this may see,
And live thereafter long and happily."

"Lady," he said, "in Florence is my home,
And in my city noble is my name;
Neither on peddling voyage am I come,
But, like my fathers, bent to gather fame;
And though thy face has set my heart aflame
Yet of thy story nothing do I know,
But here have wandered heedlessly enow.

"But since the sight of thee mine eyes did bless,
What can I be but thine? what wouldst thou have?
From those thy words, I deem from some distress
By deeds of mine thy dear life I might save;
O then, delay not! if one ever gave
His life to any, mine I give to thee;
Come, tell me what the price of love must be?

"Swift death, to be with thee a day and night
And with the earliest dawning to be slain?
Or better, a long year of great delight,
And many years of misery and pain?
Or worse, and this poor hour for all my gain?
A sorry merchant am I on this day,
E'en as thou willest so must I obey."

She said, "What brave words! naught divine am I,
But an unhappy and unheard-of maid
Compelled by evil fate and destiny
To live, who long ago should have been laid

Under the earth within the cypress shade.
Hearken awhile, and quickly shalt thou know
What deed I pray thee to accomplish now.

"God grant indeed thy words are not for naught!
Then shalt thou save me, since for many a day
To such a dreadful life I have been brought:
Nor will I spare with all my heart to pay
What man soever takes my grief away;
Ah! I will love thee, if thou lovest me
But well enough my savior now to be.

"My father lived a many years agone
Lord of this land, master of all cunning,
Who ruddy gold could draw from out gray stone,
And gather wealth from many an uncouth thing,
He made the wilderness rejoice and sing,
And such a leech he was that none could say
Without his word what soul should pass away.

"Unto Diana such a gift he gave,
Goddess above, below, and on the earth,
That I should be her virgin and her slave
From the first hour of my most wretched birth;
Therefore my life had known but little mirth
When I had come unto my twentieth year
And the last time of hallowing drew anear.

"So in her temple had I lived and died
And all would long ago have passed away,
But ere that time came, did strange things betide,
Whereby I am alive unto this day;
Alas, the bitter words that I must say!
Ah! can I bring my wretched tongue to tell
How I was brought unto this fearful hell?

"A queen I was, what gods I knew I loved,
And nothing evil was there in my thought,
And yet by love my wretched heart was moved
Until to utter ruin I was brought!
Alas! thou sayest our gods were vain and naught.
Wait, wait, till thou hast heard this tale of mine,
Then shalt thou think them devilish or divine.

"Hearken! in spite of father and of vow
I loved a man; but for that sin I think
Men had forgiven me—yea, yea, even thou;
But from the gods the full cup must I drink,
And into misery unheard-of sink,
Tormented when their own names are forgot,
And men must doubt if they e'er lived or not.

"Glorious my lover was unto my sight,
Most beautiful,—of love we grew so fain
That we at last agreed, that on a night
We should be happy, but that he were slain
Or shut in hold, and neither joy nor pain
Should else forbid that hoped-for time to be;
So came the night that made a wretch of me.

"Ah! well do I remember all that night,
When through the window shone the orb of June,
And by the bed flickered the taper's light,
Whereby I trembled, gazing at the moon:
Ah me! the meeting that we had, when soon
Into his strong, well-trusted arms I fell,
And many a sorrow we began to tell.

"Ah me! what parting on that night we had!
I think the story of my great despair
A little while might merry folk make sad;
For, as he swept away my yellow hair
To make my shoulder and my bosom bare,
I raised mine eyes, and shuddering could behold
A shadow cast upon the bed of gold:

"Then suddenly was quenched my hot desire
And he untwined his arms; the moon, so pale

A while ago, seemed changed to blood and fire,
And yet my limbs beneath me did not fail,
And neither had I strength to cry or wail,
But stood there helpless, bare, and shivering,
With staring eyes still fixed upon the thing.

"Because the shade that on the bed of gold
The changed and dreadful moon was throwing down
Was of Diana, whom I did behold,
With knotted hair, and shining girt-up gown,
And on the high white brow, a deadly frown
Bent upon us, who stood scarce drawing breath,
Striving to meet the horrible sure death.

"No word at all the dreadful goddess said,
But soon across my feet my lover lay,
And well indeed I knew that he was dead;
And would that I had died on that same day!
For in a while the image turned away,
And without words my doom I understood,
And felt a horror change my natural blood.

"And there I fell, and on the floor I lay
By the dead man, till daylight came on me,
And not a word thenceforward could I say
For three years, till of grief and misery,
The lingering pest, the cruel enemy,
My father and his folk were dead and gone,
And in this castle I was left alone:

"And then the doom foreseen upon me fell,
For Queen Diana did my body change
Into a fork-tongued dragon flesh and fell,
And through the island nightly do I range,
Or in the green sea mate with monsters strange,
When in the middle of the moonlit night
The sleepy mariner I do affright.

"But all day long upon this gold I lie
Within this place, where never mason's hand
Smote trowel on the marble noisily;
Drowsy I lie, no folk at my command
Who once was called the Lady of the Land;
Who might have bought a kingdom with a kiss,
Yea, half the world with such a sight as this."

And therewithal, with rosy fingers light,
Backward her heavy-hanging hair she threw,
To give her naked beauty more to sight;
But when, forgetting all the things he knew,
Maddened with love unto the prize he drew,
She cried, "Nay, wait! for wherefore wilt thou die,
Why should we not be happy, thou and I?

"Wilt thou not save me? once in every year
This rightful form of mine that thou dost see
By favor of the goddess have I here
From sunrise unto sunset given me,
That some brave man may end my misery.
And thou—art thou not brave? can thy heart fail,
Whose eyes e'en now are weeping at my tale?

"Then listen! when this day is overpast,
A fearful monster shall I be again,
And thou may'st be my savior at the last,
Unless, once more, thy words are naught and vain;
If thou of love and sovereignty art fain,
Come thou next morn, and when thou seest here
A hideous dragon, have thereof no fear,

"But take the loathsome head up in thine hands,
And kiss it, and be master presently
Of twice the wealth that is in all the lands,
From Cathay to the head of Italy;
And master also, if it pleaseth thee,
Of all thou praisest as so fresh and bright,
Of what thou callest crown of all delight.

"Ah! with what joy then shall I see again

The sunlight on the green grass and the trees,
And hear the clatter of the summer rain,
And see the joyous folk beyond the seas.
Ah, me! to hold my child upon my knees,
After the weeping of unkindly tears,
And all the wrongs of these four hundred years.

"Go now, go quick! leave this gray heap of stone;
And from thy glad heart think upon thy way
How I shall love thee—yea, love thee alone,
That bringest me from dark death unto day;
For this shall be thy wages and thy pay;
Unheard-of wealth, unheard-of love is near,
If thou hast heart a little dread to bear."

Therewith she turned to go; but he cried out,
"Ah! wilt thou leave me then without one kiss,
To slay the very seeds of doubt and fear,
That glad to-morrow may bring certain bliss?
Hast thou forgotten how love lives by this,
The memory of some hopeful close embrace,
Low whispered words within some lonely place?"

But she, when his bright glittering eyes she saw,
And burning cheeks, cried out, "Alas, alas!
Must I be quite undone, and wilt thou draw
A worse fate on me than the first one was?
O haste thee from this fatal place to pass!
Yet, ere thou goest, take this, lest thou shouldst deem
Thou hast been fooled by some strange mid-day dream."

So saying, blushing like a new-kissed maid,
From off her neck a little gem she drew,
That, 'twixt those snowy rose-tinged hillocks laid,
The secrets of her glorious beauty knew;
And, ere he well perceived what she would do,
She touched his hand, the gem within it lay,
And, turning, from his sight she fled away.

Then at the doorway where her rosy heel
Had glanced and vanished, he awhile did stare,
And still upon his hand he seemed to feel
The varying kisses of her fingers fair;
Then turned he toward the dreary crypt and bare,
And dizzily throughout the castle passed,
Till by the ruined fane he stood at last.

Then weighing still the gem within his hand,
He stumbled backward through the cypress wood,
Thinking the while of some strange lovely land,
Where all his life should be most fair and good;
Till on the valley's wall of hills he stood,
And slowly thence passed down unto the bay
Red with the death of that bewildering day.

The next day came, and he, who all the night
Had ceaselessly been turning in his bed,
Arose and clad himself in armor bright,
And many a danger he remembered;
Storming of towns, lone sieges full of dread,
That with renown his heart had borne him through,
And this thing seemed a little thing to do.

So on he went, and on the way he thought
Of all the glorious things of yesterday,
Naught of the price whereat they must be bought,
But ever to himself did softly say,
"No roaming now, my wars are passed away,
No long dull days devoid of happiness,
When such a love my yearning heart shall bless."

Thus to the castle did he come at last,
But when unto the gateway he drew near,

And underneath its ruined archway passed
Into the court, a strange noise did he hear,
And through his heart there shot a pang of fear,
Trembling, he gat his sword into his hand,
And midmost of the cloisters took his stand.

But for a while that unknown noise increased
A rattling, that with strident roars did blend,
And whining moans; but suddenly it ceased,
A fearful thing stood at the cloister's end,
And eyed him for a while, then 'gan to wend
Adown the cloisters, and began again
That rattling, and the moan like fiends in pain.

And as it came on towards him, with its teeth
The body of a slain goat did it tear,
The blood whereof in its hot jaws did seethe,
And on its tongue he saw the smoking hair;
Then his heart sank, and standing trembling there,
Throughout his mind wild thoughts and fearful ran,
"Some fiend she was," he said, "the bane of man."

Yet he abode her still, although his blood
Curdled within him: the thing dropped the goat,
And creeping on, came close to where he stood,
And raised its head to him and wrinkled throat.
Then he cried out and wildly at her smote,
Shutting his eyes, and turned and from the place
Ran swiftly with a white and ghastly face.

But little things rough stones and tree-trunks seemed,
And if he fell, he rose and ran on still;
No more he felt his hurts than if he dreamed,
He made no stay for valley or steep hill,
Heedless he dashed through many a foaming rill,
Until he came unto the ship at last,
And with no word into the deep hold passed.

Meanwhile the dragon, seeing him clean gone,
Followed him not, but crying horribly,
Caught up within her jaws a block of stone
And ground it into powder, then turned she,
With cries that folk could hear far out at sea,
And reached the treasure set apart of old,
To brood above the hidden heaps of gold.

Yet was she seen again on many a day
By some half-waking mariner, or herd,
Playing amid the ripples of the bay,
Or on the hills, making all things afeared,
Or in the wood that did that castle gird,
But never any man again durst go
To seek her woman's form, and end her woe.

As for the man, who knows what things he bore?
What mournful faces peopled the sad night,
What wailings vexed him with reproaches sore,
What images of that nigh-gained delight!
What dreamed caresses from soft hands and white,
Turning to horrors ere they reached the best,
What struggles vain, what shame, what huge unrest?

No man he knew, three days he lay and raved,
And cried for death, until a lethargy
Fell on him, and his fellows thought him saved;
But on the third night he awoke to die;
And at Byzantium doth his body lie
Between two blossoming pomegranate trees,
Within the churchyard of the Genoese.

A moment's silence as his tale had end,
And then the wind of that June night did blend

Their varied voices, as of that and this
They fell to talk: of those fair islands' bliss
They knew in other days, of hope they had
To live there long an easy life and glad,
With naught to vex them; and the young men
Began to nourish strange dreams even then
Of sailing east, as these had once sailed west;
Because the story of that luckless quest
With hope, not fear, had filled their joyous hearts,
And made them dream of new and noble parts
That they might act; of raising up the name
Their fathers bore, and winning boundless fame.
These too with little patience seemed to hear
That story end with shame and grief and fear;
A little thing the man had had to do,
They said, if longing burned within him so.
But at their words the older men must bow
Their heads, and, smiling, somewhat thoughtful grow,
Remembering well how fear in days gone by
Had dealt with them, and poisoned wretchedly
Good days, good deeds, and longings for all good:
Yet on the evil times they would not brood,
But sighing, strove to raise the weight of years,
And no more memory of their hopes and fears
They nourished, but such gentle thoughts as fed
The pensiveness the lovely season bred.

JULY

Fair was the morn to-day, the blossom's scent
Floated across the fresh grass, and the bees
With low vexed song from rose to lily went,
A gentle wind was in the heavy trees,
And thine eyes shone with joyous memories;
Fair was the early morn, and fair wert thou,
And I was happy,—Ah, be happy now!

Peace and content without us, love within,
That hour there was, now thunder and wild rain
Have wrapped the cowering world, and foolish sin
And nameless pride have made us wise in vain;
Ah, love! although the morn shall come again,
And on new rose-buds the new sun shall smile,
Can we regain what we have lost meanwhile?

E'en now the west grows clear of storm and threat,
But midst the lightning did the fair sun die—
Ah! he shall rise again for ages yet,
He cannot waste his life—but thou and I—
Who knows if next morn this felicity
My lips may feel, or if thou still shalt live
This seal of love renewed once more to give?

Within a lovely valley, watered well
With flowery streams, the July feast befell,
And there within the Chief-priest's fair abode
They cast aside their trouble's heavy load,
Scarce made aweary by the sultry day.
The earth no longer labored; shaded lay
The sweet-breathed kine, across the sunny vale,
From hill to hill the wandering rook did sail,
Lazily croaking, midst his dreams of spring,
Nor more awake the pink-foot dove did cling
Unto the beech-bough, murmuring now and then;
All rested but the restless sons of men,
And the great sun, that wrought this happiness
And all the vale with fruitful hopes did bless.

So in a marble chamber bright with flowers,
The old men feasted through the fresher hours,
And at the hottest time of all the day,
When now the sun was on his downward way,
Sat listening to a tale an elder told,
New to his fathers while they yet did hold
The cities of some far-off Grecian isle,
Though in the heavens the cloud of force and guile
Was gathering dark that sent them o'er the sea
To win new lands for their posterity.

THE SON OF CRŒSUS

ARGUMENT

CRŒSUS, king of Lydia, dreamed that he saw his son slain by an iron weapon, and though by every means he strove to avert this doom from him, yet thus it happened, for his son was slain by the hand of the man who seemed least of all likely to do the deed.

Of Crœsus tells my tale, a king of old
In Lydia, ere the Mede fell on the land,
A man made mighty by great heaps of gold,
Feared for the myriads strong of heart and hand
That 'neath his banners wrought out his command,
And though his latter ending fell to ill,
Yet first of every joy he had his fill.

Two sons he had, and one was dumb from birth;
The other one, that Atys had to name,
Grew up a fair youth, and of might and worth,
And well it seemed the race wherefrom he came
From him should never get reproach or shame:
But yet no stroke he struck before his death,
In no war-shout he spent his latest breath.

Now Crœsus, lying on his bed a-night,
Dreamed that he saw this dear son lying low,
And folk lamenting he was slain outright,
And that some iron thing had dealt the blow;
By whose hand guided he could nowise know,
Or if in peace by traitors it were done,
Or in some open war not yet begun.

Three times one night the vision broke his sleep,
So that at last he rose up from his bed,
That he might ponder how he best might keep
The threatened danger from so dear a head;
And, since he now was old enough to wed,
The King sent men to search the lands around,
Until some matchless maiden should be found;

That in her arms this Atys might forget
The praise of men, and fame of history,
Whereby full many a field has been made wet
With blood of men, and many a deep green sea
Been reddened therewithal, and yet shall be;
That her sweet voice might drown the people's praise,
Her eyes make bright the uneventful days.

So when at last a wonder they had brought,
From some sweet land down by the ocean's rim,
Than whom no fairer could by man be thought,
And ancient dames, scanning her limb by limb,
Had said that she was fair enough for him,
To her was Atys married with much show,
And looked to dwell with her in bliss enow.

And in meantime afield he never went,
Either to hunting or the frontier war,
No dart was cast, nor any engine bent
Anigh him, and the Lydian men afar
Must rein their steeds, and the bright blossoms mar,
If they have any lust of tourney now,
And in far meadows must they bend the bow.

And also through the palace everywhere
The swords and spears were taken from the wall
That long with honor had been hanging there,
And from the golden pillars of the hall;
Lest by mischance some sacred blade should fall,
And in its falling bring revenge at last
For many a fatal battle overpast.

And every day King Crœsus wrought with care
To save his dear son from that threatened end,
And many a beast he offered up with prayer
Unto the god, and much of wealth did spend,
That they so prayed might yet perchance defend
That life, until at least that he were dead,
With earth laid heavy on his unseen head.

But in the midst even of the wedding feast
There came a man, who by the golden hall
Sat down upon the steps, and man or beast
He heeded not, but there against the wall
He leaned his head, speaking no word at all,
Till, with his son and son's wife, came the King,
And then unto his gown the man did cling.

"What man art thou?" the King said to him then,
"That in such guise thou prayest on thy knee;
Hast thou some fell foe here among my men?
Or hast thou done an ill deed unto me?
Or has thy wife been carried over sea?
Or hast thou on this day great need of gold?
Or say why else thou now art grown so bold."

"O King," he said, "I ask no gold to-day,
And though indeed thy greatness drew me here.
No wrong have I that thou could'st wipe away;
And naught of mine the pirate folk did bear
Across the sea; none of thy folk I fear:
But all the gods are now mine enemies,
Therefore I kneel before thee on my knees.

"For as with mine own brother on a day
Within the running place at home I played,
Unwittingly I smote him in such way
That dead upon the green grass he was laid;
Half-dead myself I fled away dismayed,
Wherefore I pray thee help me in my need,
And purify my soul of this sad deed.

"If of my name and country thou wouldst know,
In Phrygia yet my father is a king,
Gordius, the son of Midas, rich enow
In corn and cattle, golden cup and ring;
And mine own name before I did this thing
Was called Adrastus, whom, in street and hall,
The slayer of his brother men now call."

"Friend," said the King, "have thou no fear of me;
For though, indeed, I am right happy now,
Yet well I know this may not always be,
And I may chance some day to kneel full low,
And to some happy man mine head to bow
With prayers to do a greater thing than this,
Dwell thou with us and win again thy bliss.

"For in this city men in sport and play
Forget the trouble that the gods have sent;
Who therewithal send wine, and many a may
As fair as she for whom the Trojan went,
And many a dear delight besides have lent,
Which, whoso is well loved of them shall keep
Till in forgetful death he falls asleep.

"Therefore to-morrow shall those rites be done

That kindred blood demands that thou hast shed,
That if the mouth of thine own mother's son
Did hap to curse thee ere he was quite dead,
The curse may lie the lighter on thy head,
Because the flower-crowned head of many a beast
Has fallen voiceless in our glorious feast."

Then did Adrastus rise and thank the King,
And the next day when yet low was the sun,
The sacrifice and every other thing
That unto these dread rites belonged, was done;
And there Adrastus dwelt, hated of none,
And loved of many, and the King loved him,
For brave and wise he was and strong of limb.

But chiefly amongst all did Atys love
The luckless stranger, whose fair tales of war
The Lydian's heart abundantly did move,
And much they talked of wandering afar
Some day to lands where many marvels are,
With still the Phrygian through all things to be
The leader unto all felicity.

Now at this time folk came unto the King
Who on a forest's borders dwelling were,
Wherein there roamed full many a dangerous thing,
As wolf and wild bull, lion and brown bear;
But chiefly in that forest was the lair
Of a great boar that no man could withstand,
And many a woe he wrought upon the land.

Since long ago that men in Calydon
Held chase, no beast like him had once been seen;
He ruined vineyards lying in the sun;
After his harvesting the men must glean
What he had left, right glad they had not been
Among the tall stalks of the ripening wheat
The fell destroyer's fatal tusks to meet.

For often would the lonely man entrapped
In vain from his dire fury strive to hide
In some thick hedge, and other whiles it happed
Some careless stranger by his place would ride,
And the tusks smote his fallen horse's side,
And what help then to such a wretch could come
With sword he could not draw, and far from home?

Or else girls, sent their water-jars to fill,
Would come back pale, too terrified to cry,
Because they had but seen him from the hill;
Or else again, with side rent wretchedly,
Some hapless damsel midst the brake would lie.
Shortly to say, there neither man nor maid
Was safe afield whether they wrought or played.

Therefore were come these dwellers by the wood
To pray the King brave men to them to send,
That they might live; and if he deemed it good,
That Atys with the other knights should wend,
They thought their grief the easier should have end;
For both by gods and men they knew him loved,
And easily by hope of glory moved.

"O Sire," they said, "thou know'st how Hercules
Was not content to wait till folk asked aid,
But sought the pests among their guarded trees;
Thou know'st what name the Theban Cadmus made,
And how the bull of Marathon was laid
Dead on the fallows of the Athenian land,
And how folk worshipped Atalanta's hand.

"Fair would thy son's name look upon the roll
Wherein such noble deeds as this are told;
And great delight shall surely fill thy soul,
Thinking upon his deeds when thou art old,
And thy brave heart is waxen faint and cold:
Dost thou not know, O King, how men will strive
That they, when dead, still in their sons may live?"

He shuddered as they spoke, because he thought,
Most certainly a winning tale is this
To draw him from the net where he is caught,
For hearts of men grow weary of all bliss;
Nor is he one to be content with his,
If he should hear the trumpet-blast of fame
And far-off people calling on his name.

"Good friends," he said, "go, get ye back again,
And doubt not I will send you men to slay
This pest ye fear: yet shall your prayer be vain
If ye with any other speak to-day;
And for my son, with me he needs must stay,
For mighty cares oppress the Lydian land.
Fear not, for ye shall have a noble band."

And with that promise must they be content,
And so departed, having feasted well.
And yet some god or other ere they went,
If they were silent, this their tale must tell
To more than one man; therefore it befell,
That at the last Prince Atys knew the thing,
And came with angry eyes unto the King.

"Father," he said, "since when am I grown vile?
Since when am I grown helpless of my hands?
Or else what folk, with words inwrought with guile,
Thine ears have poisoned; that when far-off lands
My fame might fill, by thy most strange commands
I needs must stay within this slothful home,
Whereto would God that I had never come?

"What! wilt thou take mine honor quite away?
Wouldst thou, that, as with her I just have wed
I sit among thy folk at end of day,
She should be ever turning round her head
To watch some man for war apparellèd,
Because he wears a sword that he may use,
Which grace to me thou ever wilt refuse?

"Or dost thou think, when thou hast run thy race
And thou art gone, and in thy stead I reign,
The people will do honor to my place,
Or that the lords' leal men will still remain,
If yet my father's sword be sharp in vain?
If on the wall his armor still hang up,
While for a spear I hold a drinking-cup?"

"O Son!" quoth Crœsus, "well I know thee brave,
And worthy of high deeds of chivalry;
Therefore the more thy dear life would I save,
Which now is threatened by the gods on high;
Three times one night I dreamed I saw thee die,
Slain by some deadly iron-pointed thing,
While weeping lords stood round thee in a ring."

Then loud laughed Atys, and he said again,
"Father, and did this ugly dream tell thee
What day it was on which I should be slain?
As may the gods grant I may one day be,
And not from sickness die right wretchedly,
Groaning with pain, my lords about my bed,
Wishing to God that I were fairly dead;

"But slain in battle, as the Lydian kings
Have died ere now, in some great victory
While all about the Lydian shouting rings
Death to the beaten foemen as they fly.
What death but this, O father! should I die?
But if my life by iron shall be done,
What steel to-day shall glitter in the sun?

"Yea, father, if to thee it seemeth good
To keep me from the bright steel-bearing throng,
Let me be brave at least within the wood;
For surely, if thy dream be true, no wrong
Can hap to me from this beast's tushes strong:
Unless perchance the beast is grown so wise,
He haunts the forest clad in Lydian guise."

Then Crœsus said: "O Son, I love thee so,
That thou shalt do thy will upon this tide:
But since unto this hunting thou must go,
A trusty friend along with thee shall ride,
Who not for anything shall leave thy side.
I think, indeed, he loves thee well enow
To thrust his heart 'twixt thee and any blow.

"Go then, O Son, and if by some short span
Thy life be measured, how shall it harm thee,
If while life last thou art a happy man?
And thou art happy; only unto me
Is trembling left, and infelicity:
The trembling of the man who loves on earth,
But unto thee is hope and present mirth.

"Nay, be thou not ashamed, for on this day
I fear not much: thou read'st my dream aright,
No teeth or claws shall take thy life away.
And it may chance, ere thy last glorious fight,
I shall be blinded by the endless night;
And brave Adrastus on this day shall be
Thy safeguard, and shall give good heart to me.

"Go then, and send him hither and depart;
And as the heroes did may'st thou too do,
Winning such fame as well may please thine heart."
With that word from the King did Atys go,
Who, left behind, sighed saying, "May it be so,
Even as I hope; and yet I would to God
These men upon my threshold ne'er had trod."

So when Adrastus to the King was come
He said unto him, "O my Phrygian friend,
We in this land have given you a fair home,
And 'gainst all foes your life will we defend:
Wherefore for us that life thou shouldest spend,
If any day there should be need therefore;
And now a trusty friend I need right sore.

"Doubtless ere now thou hast heard many say
There is a doom that threatens my son's life;
Therefore this place is stript of arms to-day
And therefore still bides Atys with his wife,
And tempts not any god by raising strife;
Yet none the less by no desire of his,
To whom would war be most abundant bliss.

"And since to-day some glory he may gain
Against a monstrous bestial enemy,
And that the meaning of my dream is plain,
That saith that he by steel alone shall die,
His burning wish I may not well deny;
Therefore afield to-morrow doth he wend
And herein may'st thou show thyself my friend—

"For thou as captain of his band shalt ride,
And keep a watchful eye of everything,

Nor leave him whatsoever may betide:
Lo, thou art brave, the son of a great king,
And with thy praises doth this city ring,
Why should I tell thee what a name those gain,
Who, dying for their friends, die not in vain."

Then said Adrastus, "Now were I grown base
Beyond all words, if I should spare for aught
In guarding him, so sit with smiling face,
And of this matter take no further thought,
Because with my life shall his life be bought,
If ill should hap; and no ill fate it were,
If I should die for what I hold so dear."

Then went Adrastus, and next morn all things,
That 'longed unto the hunting, were well dight,
And forth they went clad as the sons of kings.
Fair was the morn, as through the sunshine bright
They rode, the prince half-wild with great delight,
The Phrygian smiling on him soberly,
And ever looking round with watchful eye.

So through the city all the rout rode fast
With many a great black-muzzled yellow hound,
And then the teeming country-side they passed,
Until they came to sour and rugged ground,
And there rode up a little heathy mound,
That overlooked the scrubby woods and low,
That of the beast's lair somewhat they might know.

And there a good man of the country-side
Showed them the places where he mostly lay;
And they, descending, through the wood did ride,
And followed on his tracks for half the day.
And at the last they brought him well to bay,
Within an oozy space amidst the wood,
About the which a ring of alders stood.

So when the hounds' changed voices clear they heard,
With hearts aflame on towards him straight they drew;
Atys the first of all, of naught afeard,
Except that folk should say some other slew
The beast; and lustily his horn he blew,
Going afoot; then, mighty spear in hand,
Adrastus headed all the following band.

Now when they came unto the plot of ground
Where stood the boar, hounds dead about him lay
Or sprawled about, bleeding from many a wound,
But still the others held him well at bay,
Nor had he been bestead ere thus that day.
But yet, seeing Atys, straight he rushed at him,
Speckled with foam, bleeding in flank and limb.

Then Atys stood and cast his well-steeled spear
With a great shout, and straight and well it flew;
For now the broad blade, cutting through the ear,
A stream of blood from out the shoulder drew.
And therewithal another, no less true,
Adrastus cast, whereby the boar had died:
But Atys drew the bright sword from his side,

And to the tottering beast he drew anigh:
But as the sun's rays ran adown the blade
Adrastus threw a javelin hastily,
For of the mighty beast was he afraid,
Lest by his wounds he should not yet be stayed,
But with a last rush cast his life away,
And dying there, the son of Crœsus slay.

But even as the feathered dart he hurled,
His strained, despairing eyes beheld the end,
And changed seemed all the fashion of the world,
And past and future into one did blend,

As he beheld the fixed eyes of his friend,
That no reproach had in them, and no fear,
For Death had seized him ere he thought him near.

Adrastus shrieked, and running up he caught
The falling man, and from his bleeding side
Drew out the dart, and, seeing that death had brought
Deliverance to him, he thereby had died;
But ere his hand the luckless steel could guide,
And he the refuge of poor souls could win,
The horror-stricken huntsmen had rushed in.

And these, with blows and cries he heeded naught,
His unresisting hands made haste to bind;
Then of the alder-boughs a bier they wrought,
And laid the corpse thereon, and 'gan to wind
Homeward amidst the tangled wood and blind,
And going slowly, at the eventide,
Some leagues from Sardis did that day abide.

Onward next morn the slaughtered man they bore,
With him that slew him, and at end of day
They reached the city, and with mourning sore
Toward the King's palace did they take their way.
He in an open western chamber lay
Feasting, though inwardly his heart did burn
Until that Atys should to him return.

And when those wails first smote upon his ear
He set the wine-cup down, and to his feet
He rose, and bitter all-consuming fear
Swallowed his joy, and nigh he went to meet
That which was coming through the weeping street:
But in the end he thought it good to wait,
And stood there doubting all the ills of fate.

But when at last up to that royal place
Folk brought the thing he once had held so dear,
Still stood the King, staring with ghastly face
As they brought forth Adrastus and the bier,
But spoke at last slowly without a tear,
"O Phrygian man, that I did purify,
Is it through thee that Atys came to die?"

"O King," Adrastus said, "take now my life,
With whatso torment seemeth good to thee,
As my word went, for I would end this strife,
And underneath the earth lie quietly;
Nor is it my will here alive to be:
For as my brother, so Prince Atys died,
And this unlucky hand some god did guide."

Then as a man constrained, the tale he told
From end to end, nor spared himself one whit:
And as he spoke, the wood did still behold,
The trodden grass, and Atys dead on it:
And many a change o'er the King's face did flit
Of kingly rage and hatred and despair,
As on the slayer's face he still did stare.

At last he said, "Thy death avails me naught,
The gods themselves have done this bitter deed,
That I was all too happy was their thought,
Therefore thy heart is dead and mine doth bleed,
And I am helpless as a trodden weed:
Thou art but as the handle of the spear,
The caster sits far off from any fear.

"Yet, if thy hurt they meant, I can do this,—
—Loose him and let him go in peace from me—
I will not slay the slayer of all my bliss;
Yet go, poor man, for when thy face I see
I curse the gods for their felicity.
Surely some other slayer they would have found,
If thou hadst long ago been under ground.

"Alas, Adrastus! in my inmost heart
I knew the gods would one day do this thing,
But deemed indeed that it would be thy part
To comfort me amidst my sorrowing;
Make haste to go, for I am still a King!
Madness may take me, I have many hands
Who will not spare to do my worst commands."

With that Adrastus' bonds were done away,
And forthwith to the city gates he ran,
And on the road where they had been that day
Rushed through the gathering night; and some lone man
Beheld next day, his visage wild and wan,
Peering from out a thicket of the wood
Where he had split that well-belovèd blood.
And now the day of burial pomp must be,
And to those rites all lords of Lydia came
About the King, and that day they and he
Cast royal gifts of rich things on the flame;
But while they stood and wept, and called by name
Upon the dead, amidst them came a man
With raiment rent, and haggard face and wan:

Who, when the marshals would have thrust him out
And men looked strange on him, began to say,
"Surely the world is changed since ye have doubt
Of who I am; nay, turn me not away,
For ye have called me princely ere to-day—
Adrastus, son of Gordius, a great King,
Where unto Pallas Phrygian maidens sing.

"O Lydians, many a rich thing have ye cast
Into this flame, but I myself will give
A greater gift, since now I see at last
The gods are wearied for that still I live,
And with their will why should I longer strive?
Atys, O Atys, thus I give to thee
A life that lived for thy felicity."

And therewith from his side a knife he drew,
And, crying out, upon the pile he leapt,
And with one mighty stroke himself he slew.
So there these princes both together slept,
And their light ashes, gathered up, were kept
Within a golden vessel wrought all o'er
With histories of this hunting of the boar.

A gentle wind had risen midst his tale,
That bore the sweet scents of the fertile vale
In at the open windows; and these men
The burden of their years scarce noted then,
Soothed by the sweet luxurious summer time,
And by the cadence of that ancient rhyme,
Spite of its saddening import; nay, indeed,
Of some such thoughts the Wanderers had need
As that tale gave them—Yea, a man shall be
A wonder for his glorious chivalry,
First in all wisdom, of a prudent mind,
Yet none the less him too his fate shall find
Unfenced by these, a man 'mongst other men.
Yea, and will Fortune pick out, now and then,
The noblest for the anvil of her blows;
Great names are few, and yet, indeed, who knows
What greater souls have fallen 'neath the stroke
Of careless fate? Purblind are most of folk,
The happy are the masters of the earth
Which ever give small heed to hapless worth;
So goes the world, and this we needs must bear
Like eld and death: yet there were some men there
Who drank in silence to the memory

Of those who failed on earth great men to be,
Though better than the men who won the crown.
But when the sun was fairly going down
They left the house, and, following up the stream,
In the low sun saw the kingfisher gleam
'Twixt bank and alder, and the grebe steal out
From the high sedge, and, in his restless doubt,
Dive down, and rise to see what men were there;
They saw the swallow chase high up in air
The circling gnats; the shaded dusky pool
Broke by the splashing chub; the ripple cool,
Rising and falling, of some distant weir
They heard, till it oppressed the listening ear,
As twilight grew: so back they turned again
Glad of their rest, and pleasure after pain.

SONG FROM "OGIER THE DANE"

HÆC

In the white-flowered hawthorn brake,
Love, be merry for my sake;
Twine the blossoms in my hair,
Kiss me where I am most fair—
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

ILLE

Nay, the garlanded gold hair
Hides thee where thou art most fair;
Hides the rose-tinged hills of snow—
Ah, sweet love, I have thee now!
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

HÆC

Shall we weep for a dead day,
Or set Sorrow in our way?
Hidden by my golden hair,
Wilt thou weep that sweet days wear?
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

ILLE

Weep, O Love, the days that flit,
Now, while I can feel thy breath;
Then may I remember it
Sad and old, and near my death.
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

THE DAY IS COMING

(1885)

Come hither, lads, and harken, for a tale there is to tell,
Of the wonderful days a-coming, when all shall be better than well.

And the tale shall be told of a country, a land in the midst of the sea,
And folk shall call it England in the days that are going to be.

There more than one in a thousand in the days that are yet to come,
Shall have some hope of the morrow, some joy of the ancient home.

For then, laugh not, but listen to this strange tale of mine,
All folk that are in England shall be better lodged than swine.

Then a man shall work and bethink him, and rejoice in the deeds of his hand,
Nor yet come home in the even too faint and weary to stand.

Men in that time a-coming shall work and have no fear
For to-morrow's lack of earning and the hunger-wolf anear.

I tell you this for a wonder, that no man then shall be glad
Of his fellow's fall and mishap to snatch at the work he had.

For that which the worker winneth shall then be his indeed,
Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by him that sowed no seed.

O strange new wonderful justice! But for whom shall we gather the gain?

For ourselves and for each of our fellows,
and no hand shall labor in vain.

Then all Mine and all Thine shall be Ours,
and no more shall any man crave
For riches that serve for nothing but to
fetter a friend for a slave.

And what wealth then shall be left us when
none shall gather gold
To buy his friend in the market, and pinch
and pine the sold?

Nay, what save the lovely city, and the
little house on the hill,
And the wastes and the woodland beauty,
and the happy fields we till;

And the homes of ancient stories, the
tombs of the mighty dead;
And the wise men seeking out marvels, and
the poet's teeming head;

And the painter's hand of wonder; and
the marvellous fiddle-bow,
And the banded choirs of music: all those
that do and know.

For all these shall be ours and all men's;
nor shall any lack a share
Of the toil and the gain of living in the
days when the world grows fair.

Ah! such are the days that shall be! But
what are the deeds of to-day,
In the days of the years we dwell in, that
wear our lives away?

Why, then, and for what are we waiting?
There are three words to speak;
We will it, and what is the foeman but
the dream-strong wakened and weak?

O why and for what are we waiting? while
our brothers droop and die,
And on every wind of the heavens a
wasted life goes by.

How long shall they reproach us where
crowd on crowd they dwell,
Poor ghosts of the wicked city, the gold-
crushed, hungry hell?

Through squalid life they labored, in sor-
did grief they died,
Those sons of a mighty mother, those
props of England's pride.

They are gone; there is none can undo
it, nor save our souls from the
curse;
But many a million cometh, and shall they
be better or worse?

It is we must answer and hasten, and open
wide the door
For the rich man's hurrying terror, and
the slow-foot hope of the poor.

Yea, the voiceless wrath of the wretched,
and their unlearned discontent,
We must give it voice and wisdom till the
waiting-tide be spent.

Come, then, since all things call us, the
living and the dead,
And o'er the weltering tangle a glimmer-
ing light is shed.

Come, then, let us cast off fooling, and
put by ease and rest,
For the Cause alone is worthy till the
good days bring the best.

Come, join in the only battle wherein no
man can fail,
Where whoso fadeth and dieth, yet his
deed shall still prevail.

Ah! come, cast off all fooling, for this, at
least, we know:
That the Dawn and the Day is coming,
and forth the Banners go.

EDWARD FITZGERALD (1809–1883)

THE RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYÁM

(1859) [1]

I

Wake! For the Sun, who scatter'd into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Drives Night along with them from Heav'n, and strikes
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

II

Before the phantom of False morning [2] died,
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
"When all the Temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside?"

III

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

IV

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES [3] on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

V

Iram [4] indeed is gone with all his Rose,
And Jamshyd's [5] Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows;
But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

VI

And David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Pehlevi, [6] with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That sallow [7] cheek of hers to incarnadine.

VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

VIII

Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

IX

Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say:

1 Four different versions were printed in 1859, 1868, 1872, and 1879. The last is here given.

2 The False Dawn, a short-lived gleam appearing on the horizon in Eastern countries, an hour or so before the true day.

3 Alluding to *Exodus IV, 6*, where Moses drew forth his hand white; hence a bough white with blossoms.

4 Iram, or Irem, built by King Shaddad. See the extract from Southey's "Thalaba."

5 A mythical Persian King, whose seven-ringed cup symbolized the seven heavens, seven planets, etc.

6 Ancient Sanskrit tongue.

7 Red, yellow, and white roses were all common in Persia.

Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?
And this first Summer month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád away.

X

Well, let it take them! What have we to do
With Kaikobád[1] the Great, or Kaikhosrú?[1]
Let Zál and Rustum[2] bluster as they will,
Or Hátim[3] call to Supper—heed not you.

XI

With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown
Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot—
And Peace to Mahmúd on his golden Throne!

XII

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

XIII

Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

XIV

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

XV

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,
And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

XVI

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

XVII

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.

XVIII

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts[4] where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep;
And Bahrám,[5] that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

XIX

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

XX

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

XXI

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears
To-DAY of Past Regrets and future Fears:

1 Persian kings.
2 Rustum, central figure of Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum," was the Hercules of Persia; Zal was his father.
3 A model of Oriental generosity.
4 The ruined city of Persepolis.
5 A Persian king, said to have lived in such splendor that he had seven castles symbolizing the seven heavens.

To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

XXII

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

XXIII

And we, that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—for whom?

XXIV

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and —sans End!

XXV

Alike for those who for To-day prepare,
And those that after some To-morrow stare,
A Muezzín from the Tower of Darkness cries,
"Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor There."

XXVI

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so wisely—they are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

XXVIII

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

XXIX

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing
Nor *Whence,* like Water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *Whither,* willy-nilly blowing.

XXX

What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence?*
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence!
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

XXXI

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn[1] sate,
And many a knot unravel'd by the Road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

XXXII

There was the Door to which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which I might not see:

1 Saturn, ruler of the seventh heaven.

Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
There was—and then no more of THEE and ME.[1]

XXXIII

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

XXXIV

Then of the THEE IN ME who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
A lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard,
As from Without—"THE ME WITHIN THEE BLIND!"

XXXV

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn
I lean'd, the Secret of my Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While you live,
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall return."

XXXVI

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I kiss'd,
How many Kisses might it take—and give!

XXXVII

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay:
And with its all-obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"

XXXVIII

And has not such a Story from of Old
Down Man's successive generations roll'd
Of such a clod of saturated Earth
Cast by the Maker into Human mould?

XXXIX

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw
For earth to drink of,[2] but may steal below
To quench the fire of Anguish in some Eye
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

XL

As then the Tulip for her morning sup
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks up,
Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you—like an empty Cup.

XLI

Perplext no more with Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

XLII

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends in—Yes;
Think then you are TO-DAY what YESTERDAY
You were—TO-MORROW you shall not be less.

XLIII

So when that Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

XLIV

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Were't not a Shame—were't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

1 Some passing belief in the duration of human identity, then realization that all individuals merge in the Whole of the Oriental mystic.

2 The Persian custom of pouring a little wine on the ground, perhaps as a libation to Mother Earth.

XLV

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultán to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

XLVI

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
The Eternal Sákí[1] from that Bowl has pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

XLVII

When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.

XLVIII

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has reach'd
The NOTHING it set out from—Oh, make haste!

XLIX

Would you that spangle of Existence spend
About THE SECRET—quick about it, Friend!
A Hair perhaps divides the False and True—
And upon what, prithee, may life depend?

L

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True;
Yes; and a single Alif were the clue—
Could you but find it—to the Treasure-house,
And peradventure to THE MASTER too;

LI

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;
Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi;[2] and
They change and perish all—but He remains;

LII

A moment guess'd—then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.

LIII

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,
You gaze TO-DAY, while You are You—how then
TO-MORROW, when You shall be You no more?

LIV

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of This and That endeavor and dispute;
Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

LV

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house;
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

LVI

For "Is" and "Is-NOT" though with Rule and Line
And "UP-AND-DOWN" by Logic I define,

1 Cupbearer.

2 From fish to moon.

Of all that one should care to fathom, I
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

LVII

Ah, but my Computations, People say,
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?—Nay,
'Twas only striking from the Calendar
Unborn To-morrow and dead Yesterday.

LVIII

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bid me taste of it; and t'was—the Grape!

LIX

The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute:
The sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute:

LX

The mighty Mahmúd, Allah-breathing Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde [1]
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

LXI

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare
Blaspheme the twisted tendril as a Snare?
A Blessing, we should use it, should we not?
And if a Curse—why, then, Who set it there?

LXII

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on trust,
Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,
To fill the Cup—when crumbled into Dust!

LXIII

Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain—*This* Life flies;
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

LXIV

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

LXV

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burn'd,
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep
They told their comrades, and to Sleep return'd.

LXVI

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
And answer'd "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell:"

LXVII

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire,
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

LXVIII

We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the Sun-illumined Lantern held

1 Probably an allusion to Sultan Mahmúd's conquests over the swarthy Hindus.

In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

LXIX

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

LXX

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;
And He that toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!

LXXI

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

LXXII

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for It
As impotently moves as you or I.

LXXIII

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed:
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

LXXIV

YESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did prepare;
TO-MORROW's Silence, Triumph, or Despair:
Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why:
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.

LXXV

I tell you this—When, started from the Goal,
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
Of Heav'n Parwín and Mushtarí [1] they flung,
In my predestined Plot of Dust and Soul

LXXVI

The Vine had struck a fibre: which about
If clings my Being—let the Dervish flout;
Of my Base metal may be filed a Key
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

LXXVII

And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath consume me quite,
One Flash of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

LXXVIII

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

LXXIX

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allay'd—
Sue for a Debt he never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!

LXXX

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with predestined Evil round

1 The Pleiades and Jupiter.

Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

LXXXI

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take!

. . . . . .

LXXXII

As under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán[1] away,
Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

LXXXIII

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
And some loquacious Vessels were; and some
Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

LXXXIV

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common Earth was ta'en
And to this Figure moulded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."

LXXXV

Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy;
And He that with his hand the Vessel made
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

1 The long Mohammedan fast.

LXXXVI

After a momentary silence spake
Some Vessel of a more ungainly Make;
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry:
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"

LXXXVII

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot—
I think a Súfi[2] pipkin—waxing hot—
"All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me, then,
Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?"

LXXXVIII

"Why," said another, "Some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell
The luckless Pots he marr'd in making—Pish!
He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

LXXXIX

"Well," murmur'd one, "Let whoso make or buy,
My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry:
But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
Methinks I might recover by and by."

XC

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
The little Moon look'd in that all were seeking:
And then they jogg'd each other, "Brother! Brother!
Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking!"

. . . . . .

XCI

Ah, with the Grape my fading life provide,

2 The Sufis were a mystical sect of Persia near the end of the Middle Ages.

And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

XCII

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

XCIII

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this World much wrong:
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

XCIV

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

XCV

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honor—Well,
I wonder often what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.

XCVI

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

XCVII

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, reveal'd,
To which the fainting Traveller might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

XCVIII

Would but some wingèd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

XCIX

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

. . . . . .

C

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

CI

And when like her, oh Sáki,[1] you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!

1 Cupbearer.

JAMES THOMSON (1834–1882)

THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT

(1874)

PROEM

Lo, thus, as prostrate, "In the dust I write
My heart's deep languor and my soul's sad tears."
Yet why evoke the spectres of black night
To blot the sunshine of exultant years?
Why disinter dead faith from mouldering hidden?
Why break the seals of mute despair unbidden,
And wail life's discords into careless ears?

Because a cold rage seizes one at whiles
To show the bitter old and wrinkled truth
Stripped naked of all vesture that beguiles,
False dreams, false hopes, false masks and modes of youth;
Because it gives some sense of power and passion
In helpless impotence to try to fashion
Our woe in living words howe'er uncouth.

Surely I write not for the hopeful young,
Or those who deem their happiness of worth,
Or such as pasture and grow fat among
The shows of life and feel nor doubt nor dearth,
Or pious spirits with a God above them
To sanctify and glorify and love them,
Or sages who foresee a heaven on earth.

For none of these I write, and none of these
Could read the writing if they deigned to try:
So may they flourish, in their due degrees,
On our sweet earth and in their unplaced sky.
If any cares for the weak words here written,
It must be some one desolate, Fate-smitten,
Whose faith and hope are dead, and who would die.

Yes, here and there some weary wanderer
In that same city of tremendous night,
Will understand the speech, and feel a stir
Of fellowship in all-disastrous fight;
"I suffer mute and lonely, yet another
Uplifts his voice to let me know a brother
Travels the same wild paths though out of sight."

O sad Fraternity, do I unfold
Your dolorous mysteries shrouded from of yore?
Nay, be assured; no secret can be told
To any who divined it not before:
None uninitiate by many a presage
Will comprehend the language of the message,
Although proclaimed aloud for evermore.

I

The City is of Night; perchance of Death,
But certainly of Night; for never there
Can come the lucid morning's fragrant breath
After the dewy dawning's cold grey air;
The moon and stars may shine with scorn or pity;
The sun has never visited that city,
For it dissolveth in the daylight fair.

Dissolveth like a dream of night away;
Though present in distempered gloom of thought
And deadly weariness of heart all day.
But when a dream night after night is brought
Throughout a week, and such weeks few or many

Recur each year for several years, can any
Discern that dream from real life in aught?

For life is but a dream whose shapes return,
Some frequently, some seldom, some by night
And some by day, some night and day: we learn,
The while all change and many vanish quite,
In their recurrence with recurrent changes
A certain seeming order; where this ranges
We count things real; such is memory's might.

A river girds the city west and south,
The main north channel of a broad lagoon,
Regurging with the salt tides from the mouth;
Waste marshes shine and glister to the moon
For leagues, then moorland black, then stony ridges;
Great piers and causeways, many noble bridges,
Connect the town and islet suburbs strewn.

Upon an easy slope it lies at large,
And scarcely overlaps the long curved crest
Which swells out two leagues, from the river marge.
A trackless wilderness rolls north and west,
Savannahs, savage woods, enormous mountains,
Bleak uplands, black ravines with torrent fountains;
And eastward rolls the shipless sea's unrest.

The city is not ruinous, although
Great ruins of an unremembered past,
With others of a few short years ago
More sad, are found within its precincts vast.
The street-lamps always burn; but scarce a casement
In house or palace front from roof to basement
Doth glow or gleam athwart the mirk air cast.

The street-lamps burn amidst the baleful glooms,
Amidst the soundless solitudes immense
Of rangèd mansions dark and still as tombs.
The silence which benumbs or strains the sense
Fulfils with awe the soul's despair unweeping:
Myriads of habitants are ever sleeping,
Or dead, or fled from nameless pestilence!

Yet as in some necropolis you find
Perchance one mourner to a thousand dead,
So there; worn faces that look deaf and blind
Like tragic masks of stone. With weary tread,
Each wrapt in his own doom, they wander, wander,
Or sit foredone and desolately ponder
Through sleepless hours with heavy drooping head.

Mature men chiefly, few in age or youth,
A woman rarely, now and then a child:
A child! If here the heart turns sick with ruth
To see a little one from birth defiled,
Or lame or blind, as preordained to languish
Through youthless life, think how it bleeds with anguish
To meet one erring in that homeless wild.

They often murmur to themselves, they speak
To one another seldom, for their woe
Broods maddening inwardly and scorns to wreak
Itself abroad; and if at whiles it grow
To frenzy which must rave, none heeds the clamor.
Unless there waits some victim of like glamour,
To rave in turn, who lends attentive show.

The City is of Night, but not of Sleep;
There sweet sleep is not for the weary brain;
The pitiless hours like years and ages creep,

A night seems termless hell. This dreadful strain
Of thought and consciousness which never ceases,
Or which some moments' stupor but increases,
This, worse than woe, makes wretches there insane.

They leave all hope behind who enter there:
One certitude while sane they cannot leave,
One anodyne for torture and despair;
The certitude of Death, which no reprieve
Can put off long; and which divinely tender,
But waits the outstretched hand to promptly render
That draught whose slumber nothing can bereave.[1]

II

Because he seemed to walk with an intent
I followed him; who, shadowlike and frail,
Unswervingly though slowly onward went,
Regardless, wrapt in thought as in a veil:
Thus step for step with lonely sounding feet
We travelled many a long dim silent street.

At length he paused: a black mass in the gloom,
A tower that merged into the heavy sky;
Around, the huddled stones of grave and tomb:
Some old God's-acre now corruption's sty:
He murmured to himself with dull despair,
Here Faith died, poisoned by this charnel air.

Then turning to the right went on once more,
And travelled weary roads without suspense;
And reached at last a low wall's open door,
Whose villa gleamed beyond the foliage dense:
He gazed, and muttered with a hard despair,
Here Love died, stabbed by its own worshipped pair.

Then turning to the right resumed his march,
And travelled streets and lanes with wondrous strength,
Until on stooping through a narrow arch
We stood before a squalid house at length:
He gazed, and whispered with a cold despair,
Here Hope died, starved out in its utmost lair.

When he had spoken thus, before he stirred,
I spoke, perplexed by something in the signs
Of desolation I had seen and heard
In this drear pilgrimage to ruined shrines:
When Faith and Love and Hope are dead indeed,
Can Life still live? By what doth it proceed?

As whom his one intense thought overpowers,
He answered coldly, Take a watch, erase
The signs and figures of the circling hours,
Detach the hands, remove the dial-face;
The works proceed until run down; although
Bereft of purpose, void of use, still go.

Then turning to the right paced on again,
And traversed squares and travelled streets whose glooms
Seemed more and more familiar to my ken;
And reached that sullen temple of the tombs;
And paused to murmur with the old despair,
Here Faith died, poisoned by this charnel air.

I ceased to follow, for the knot of doubt
Was severed sharply with a cruel knife:

1 Though the Garden of thy Life be wholly waste, the sweet flowers withered, the fruit-trees barren, over its wall hang ever the rich dark clusters of the Vine of Death, within easy reach of thy hand, which may pluck of them when it will.

He circled thus for ever tracing out
  The series of the fraction left of Life;
Perpetual recurrence in the scope
Of but three terms, dead Faith, dead Love, dead Hope.[1]

III

Although lamps burn along the silent streets;
  Even when moonlight silvers empty squares
The dark holds countless lanes and close retreats;
  But when the night its sphereless mantle wears
The open spaces yawn with gloom abysmal,
The sombre mansions loom immense and dismal,
  The lanes are black as subterranean lairs.

And soon the eye a strange new vision learns:
  The night remains for it as dark and dense,
Yet clearly in this darkness it discerns
  As in the daylight with its natural sense;
Perceives a shade in shadow not obscurely,
Pursues a stir of black in blackness surely,
  Sees spectres also in the gloom intense.

The ear, too, with the silence vast and deep
  Becomes familiar though unreconciled;
Hears breathings as of hidden life asleep,
  And muffled throbs as of pent passions wild,
Far murmurs, speech of pity or derision;
But all more dubious than the things of vision,
  So that it knows not when it is beguiled.

No time abates the first despair and awe,
  But wonder ceases soon; the weirdest thing
Is felt least strange beneath the lawless law
  Where Death-in-Life is the eternal king;
Crushed impotent beneath this reign of terror,
Dazed with such mysteries of woe and error,
  The soul is too outworn for wondering.

IV

He stood alone within the spacious square
  Declaiming from the central grassy mound,
With head uncovered and with streaming hair,
  As if large multitudes were gathered round:
A stalwart shape, the gestures full of might,
The glances burning with unnatural light:—

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: All was black,
In heaven no single star, on earth no track;
A brooding hush without a stir or note,
The air so thick it clotted in my throat;
And thus for hours; then some enormous things
Swooped past with savage cries and clanking wings:
  But I strode on austere;
  No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Eyes of fire
Glared at me throbbing with a starved desire;
The hoarse and heavy and carnivorous breath
Was hot upon me from deep jaws of death;
Sharp claws, swift talons, fleshless fingers cold
Plucked at me from the bushes, tried to hold:
  But I strode on austere;
  No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Lo you, there,
That hillock burning with a brazen glare;
Those myriad dusky flames with points a-glow
Which writhed and hissed and darted to and fro;

[1] Life divided by that persistent three = $\frac{LXX}{333}$ = $\frac{\cdot\cdot\cdot}{210}$.

A Sabbath of the Serpents, heaped pell-mell
For Devil's roll-call and some *fête* of Hell:
Yet I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Meteors ran
And crossed their javelins on the black sky-span;
The zenith opened to a gulf of flame,
The dreadful thunderbolts jarred earth's fixed frame:
The ground all heaved in waves of fire that surged
And weltered round me sole there unsubmerged:
Yet I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Air once more,
And I was close upon a wild sea-shore;
Enormous cliffs arose on either hand,
The deep tide thundered up a league-broad strand;
White foambelts seethed there, wan spray swept and flew;
The sky broke, moon and stars and clouds and blue:
And I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: On the left
The sun arose and crowned a broad crag-cleft;
There stopped and burned out black, except a rim,
A bleeding eyeless socket, red and dim;
Whereon the moon fell suddenly south-west,
And stood above the right-hand cliffs at rest:
Still I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: From the right
A shape came slowly with a ruddy light;
A woman with a red lamp in her hand,
Bareheaded and barefooted on that strand;
O desolation moving with such grace!
O anguish with such beauty in thy face!
I fell as on my bier,
Hope travailed with such fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: I was twain,
Two selves distinct that cannot join again;
One stood apart and knew but could not stir,
And watched the other stark in swoon and her;
And she came on, and never turned aside,
Between such sun and moon and roaring tide:
And as she came more near
My soul grew mad with fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Hell is mild
And piteous matched with that accursèd wild;
A large black sign was on her breast that bowed,
A broad black band ran down her snow-white shroud;
That lamp she held was her own burning heart,
Whose blood-drops trickled step by step apart:
The mystery was clear;
Mad rage had swallowed fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: By the sea
She knelt and bent above that senseless me;
Those lamp-drops fell upon my white brow there,
She tried to cleanse them with her tears and hair;
She murmured words of pity, love, and woe,
She heeded not the level rushing flow:
And mad with rage and fear,
I stood stonebound so near.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: When the tide
Swept up to her there kneeling by my side,
She clasped that corpse-like me, and they were borne
Away, and this vile me was left forlorn;

I know the whole sea cannot quench that heart,
Or cleanse that brow, or wash those two apart:
They love; their doom is drear,
Yet they nor hope nor fear;
But I, what do I here?

V

How he arrives there none can clearly know;
Athwart the mountains and immense wild tracts,
Or flung a waif upon that vast sea-flow,
Or down the river's boiling cataracts:
To reach it is as dying fever-stricken;
To leave it, slow faint birth intense pangs quicken;
And memory swoons in both the tragic acts.

But being there one feels a citizen;
Escape seems hopeless to the heart forlorn:
Can Death-in-Life be brought to life again?
And yet release does come; there comes a morn
When he awakes from slumbering so sweetly
That all the world is changed for him completely,
And he is verily as if new-born.

He scarcely can believe the blissful change,
He weeps perchance who wept not while accurst;
Never again will he approach the range
Infected by that evil spell now burst:
Poor wretch! who once hath paced that dolent city
Shall pace it often, doomed beyond all pity,
With horror ever deepening from the first.

Though he possess sweet babes and loving wife,
A home of peace by loyal friendships cheered,
And love them more than death or happy life,
They shall avail not; he must dree his weird;
Renounce all blessings for that imprecation,
Steal forth and haunt that builded desolation,
Of woe and terrors and thick darkness reared.

VI

I sat forlornly by the river-side,
And watched the bridge-lamps glow like golden stars
Above the blackness of the swelling tide,
Down which they struck rough gold in ruddier bars;
And heard the heave and splashing of the flow
Against the wall a dozen feet below.

Large elm-tres stood along that river-walk;
And under one, a few steps from my seat,
I heard strange voices join in stranger talk,
Although I had not heard approaching feet;
These bodiless voices in my waking dream
Flowed dark words blending with the sombre stream:—

And you have after all come back; come back.
I was about to follow on your track.
And you have failed: our spark of hope is black.

That I have failed is proved by my return:
The spark is quenched, nor ever more will burn.
But listen; and the story you shall learn.

I reached the portal common spirits fear,
And read the words above it, dark yet clear,
"Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here":

And would have passed in, gratified to gain
That positive eternity of pain,
Instead of this insufferable inane.

A demon warder clutched me, Not so fast;
First leave your hopes behind!—But years have passed
Since I left all behind me, to the last:

You cannot count for hope, with all your wit,

This bleak despair that drives me to the Pit:
How could I seek to enter void of it?

He snarled, What thing is this which apes a soul,
And would find entrance to our gulf of dole
Without the payment of the settled toll?

Outside the gate he showed an open chest:
Here pay their entrance fees the souls unblest;
Cast in some hope, you enter with the rest.

This is Pandora's box; whose lid shall shut,
And Hell-gate too, when hopes have filled it; but
They are so thin that it will never glut.

I stood a few steps backwards, desolate;
And watched the spirits pass me to their fate,
And fling off hope, and enter at the gate.

When one casts off a load he springs upright,
Squares back his shoulders, breathes with all his might,
And briskly paces forward strong and light:

But these, as if they took some burden, bowed;
The whole frame sank; however strong and proud
Before, they crept in quite infirm and cowed.

And as they passed me, earnestly from each
A morsel of his hope I did beseech,
To pay my entrance; but all mocked my speech.

Not one would cede a tittle of his store
Though knowing that in instants three or four
He must resign the whole for evermore.

So I returned. Our destiny is fell;
For in this Limbo we must ever dwell,
Shut out alike from Heaven and Earth and Hell.

The other sighed back, Yea; but if we grope
With care through all this Limbo's dreary scope,
We yet may pick up some minute lost hope;

And, sharing it between us, entrance win,
In spite of fiends so jealous for gross sin:
Let us without delay our search begin.

VII

Some say that phantoms haunt those shadowy streets,
And mingle freely there with sparse mankind;
And tell of ancient woes and black defeats,
And murmur mysteries in the grave enshrined:
But others think them visions of illusion,
Or even men gone far in self-confusion;
No man there being wholly sane in mind.

And yet a man who raves, however mad,
Who bares his heart and tells of his own fall,
Reserves some inmost secret good or bad:
The phantoms have no reticence at all:
The nudity of flesh will blush though tameless,
The extreme nudity of bone grins shameless,
The unsexed skeleton mocks shroud and pall.

I have seen phantoms there that were as men
And men that were as phantoms flit and roam;
Marked shapes that were not living to my ken,
Caught breathings acrid as with Dead Sea foam:
The City rests for man so weird and awful,
That his intrusion there might seem unlawful,
And phantoms there may have their proper home.

VIII

While I still lingered on that river-walk,
And watched the tide as black as our black doom,

I heard another couple join in talk,
And saw them to the left hand in the gloom
Seated against an elm bole on the ground,
Their eyes intent upon the stream profound.

"I never knew another man on earth
But had some joy and solace in his life,
Some chance of triumph in the dreadful strife:
My doom has been unmitigated dearth."

"We gaze upon the river, and we note
The various vessels large and small that float,
Ignoring every wrecked and sunken boat."

"And yet I asked no splendid dower, no spoil
Of sway or fame or rank or even wealth;
But homely love with common food and health,
And nightly sleep to balance daily toil."

"This all-too humble soul would arrogate
Unto itself some signalising hate
From the supreme indifference of Fate!"

"Who is most wretched in this dolorous place?
I think myself; yet I would rather be
My miserable self than He, than He
Who formed such creatures to His own disgrace.

"The vilest thing must be less vile than Thou
From whom it had its being, God and Lord!
Creator of all woe and sin! abhorred,
Malignant and implacable! I vow

"That not for all Thy power furled and unfurled,
For all the temples to Thy glory built,
Would I assume the ignominious guilt
Of having made such men in such a world."

"As if a Being, God or Fiend, could reign,
At once so wicked, foolish, and insane,
As to produce men when He might refrain!

"The world rolls round for ever like a mill;
It grinds out death and life and good and ill;
It has no purpose, heart or mind or will.

"While air of Space and Time's full river flow
The mill must blindly whirl unresting so:
It may be wearing out, but who can know?

"Man might know one thing were his sight less dim;
That it whirls not to suit his petty whim,
That it is quite indifferent to him.

"Nay, does it treat him harshly as he saith?
It grinds him some slow years of bitter breath,
Then grinds him back into eternal death."

IX

It is full strange to him who hears and feels,
When wandering there in some deserted street,
The booming and the jar of ponderous wheels,
The trampling clash of heavy ironshod feet:
Who in this Venice of the Black Sea rideth?
Who in this city of the stars abideth
To buy or sell as those in daylight sweet?

The rolling thunder seems to fill the sky
As it comes on; the horses snort and strain,
The harness jingles, as it passes by;
The hugeness of an overburthened wain:
A man sits nodding on the shaft or trudges
Three parts asleep beside his fellow-drudges:
And so it rolls into the night again.

What merchandise? whence, whither, and for whom?
Perchance it is a Fate-appointed hearse,
Bearing away to some mysterious tomb
Or Limbo of the scornful universe
The joy, the peace, the life-hope, the abortions

Of all things good which should have been our portions,
But have been strangled by that City's curse.

X

The mansion stood apart in its own ground;
In front thereof a fragrant garden-lawn,
High trees about it, and the whole walled round:
The massy iron gates were both withdrawn;
And every window of its front shed light,
Portentous in that City of the Night.

But though thus lighted it was deadly still
As all the countless bulks of solid gloom:
Perchance a congregation to fulfil
Solemnities of silence in this doom,
Mysterious rites of dolor and despair
Permitting not a breath of chant or prayer?

Broad steps ascended to a terrace broad
Whereon lay still light from the open door;
The hall was noble, and its aspect awed,
Hung round with heavy black from dome to floor;
And ample stairways rose to left and right
Whose balustrades were also draped with night.

I paced from room to room, from hall to hall,
Nor any life throughout the maze discerned;
But each was hung with its funereal pall,
And held a shrine, around which tapers burned,
With picture or with statue or with bust,
All copied from the same fair form of dust:

A woman very young and very fair:
Beloved by bounteous life and joy and youth,
And loving these sweet lovers, so that care
And age and death seemed not for her in sooth:
Alike as stars, all beautiful and bright,
These shapes lit up that mausoléan night.

At length I heard a murmur as of lips,
And reached an open oratory hung
With heaviest blackness of the whole eclipse;
Beneath the dome a fuming censer swung;
And one lay there upon a low white bed,
With tapers burning at the foot and head:

The Lady of the images: supine,
Deathstill, lifesweet, with folded palms she lay:
And kneeling there as at a sacred shrine
A young man wan and worn who seemed to pray:
A crucifix of dim and ghostly white
Surmounted the large altar left in night:—

The chambers of the mansion of my heart,
In every one whereof thine image dwells,
Are black with grief eternal for thy sake.

The inmost oratory of my soul,
Wherein thou ever dwellest quick or dead,
Is black with grief eternal for thy sake.

I kneel beside thee and I clasp the cross
With eyes for ever fixed upon that face
So beautiful and dreadful in its calm.

I kneel here patient as thou liest there;
As patient as a statue carved in stone,
Of adoration and eternal grief.

While thou dost not awake I cannot move;
And something tells me thou wilt never wake,
And I alive feel turning into stone.

Most beautiful were Death to end my grief,
Most hateful to destroy the sight of thee,
Dear vision better than all death or life.

But I renounce all choice of life or death,
For either shall be ever at thy side,
And thus in bliss or woe be ever well.—

He murmured thus and thus in monotone,
Intent upon that uncorrupted face,
Entranced except his moving lips alone:
I glided with hushed footsteps from the place.
This was the festival that filled with light
That palace in the City of the Night.

XI

What men are they who haunt these fatal glooms,
And fill their living mouths with dust of death,
And make their habitations in the tombs,
And breathe eternal sighs with mortal breath,
And pierce life's pleasant veil of various error
To reach that void of darkness and old terror
Wherein expire the lamps of hope and faith?

They have much wisdom yet they are not wise,
They have much goodness yet they do not well,
(The fools we know have their own Paradise,
The wicked also have their proper Hell);
They have much strength but still their doom is stronger,
Much patience but their time endureth longer,
Much valor but life mocks it with some spell.

They are most rational and yet insane:
An outward madness not to be controlled;
A perfect reason in the central brain,
Which has no power, but sitteth wan and cold,
And sees the madness, and foresees as plainly
The ruin in its path, and trieth vainly
To cheat itself refusing to behold.

And some are great in rank and wealth and power,
And some renowned for genius and for worth;
And some are poor and mean, who brood and cower
And shrink from notice, and accept all dearth
Of body, heart and soul, and leave to others
All boons of life: yet these and those are brothers,
The saddest and the weariest men on earth.

XII

Our isolated units could be brought
To act together for some common end?
For one by one, each silent with his thought,
I marked a long loose line approach and wend
Athwart the great cathedral's cloistered square,
And slowly vanish from the moonlit air.

Then I would follow in among the last:
And in the porch a shrouded figure stood,
Who challenged each one pausing ere he passed,
With deep eyes burning through a blank white hood,
Whence come you in the world of life and light
To this our City of Tremendous Night?—

From pleading in a senate of rich lords
For some scant justice to our countless hordes
Who toil half-starved with scarce a human right:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From wandering through many a solemn scene
Of opium visions, with a heart serene
And intellect miraculously bright:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From making hundreds laugh and roar with glee
By my transcendent feats of mimicry,
And humor wanton as an elfish sprite:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From prayer and fasting in a lonely cell,
Which brought an ecstasy ineffable
Of love and adoration and delight:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From ruling on a splendid kingly throne
A nation which beneath my rule has grown
Year after year in wealth and arts and might:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From preaching to an audience fired with faith
The Lamb who died to save our souls from death,
Whose blood hath washed our scarlet sins wool-white:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From drinking fiery poison in a den
Crowded with tawdry girls and squalid men,
Who hoarsely laugh and curse and brawl and fight:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From picturing with all beauty and all grace
First Eden and the parents of our race,
A luminous rapture unto all men's sight:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From writing a great work with patient plan
To justify the ways of God to man,
And show how ill must fade and perish quite:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From desperate fighting with a little band
Against the powerful tyrants of our land,
To free our brethren in their own despite:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

Thus, challenged by that warder sad and stern,
Each one responded with his countersign,
Then entered the cathedral; and in turn
I entered also, having given mine;
But lingered near until I heard no more,
And marked the closing of the massive door.

XIII

Of all things human which are strange and wild
This is perchance the wildest and most strange,
And showeth man most utterly beguiled,
To those who haunt that sunless City's range;
That he bemoans himself for aye, repeating
How time is deadly swift, how life is fleeting,
How naught is constant on the earth but change.

The hours are heavy on him and the days;
The burden of the months he scarce can bear;
And often in his secret soul he prays
To sleep through barren periods unaware,
Arousing at some longed-for date of pleasure;
Which having passed and yielded him small treasure,
He would outsleep another term of care.

Yet in his marvellous fancy he must make
Quick wings for Time, and see it fly from us;
This Time which crawleth like a monstrous snake,
Wounded and slow and very venomous;
Which creeps blindwormlike round the earth and ocean,
Distilling poison at each painful motion,
And seems condemned to circle ever thus.

And since he cannot spend and use aright
The little time here given him in trust,
But wasteth it in weary undelight
Of foolish toil and trouble, strife and lust,
He naturally claimeth to inherit
The everlasting Future, that his merit
May have full scope; as surely is most just.

O length of the intolerable hours,
O nights that are as æons of slow pain,
O Time, too ample for our vital powers,
O Life, whose woeful vanities remain
Immutable for all of all our legions
Through all the centuries and in all the regions,
Not of your speed and variance *we* complain.

We do not ask a longer term of strife,
Weakness and weariness and nameless woes:
We do not claim renewed and endless life

When this which is our torment here shall close,
An everlasting conscious inanition!
We yearn for speedy death in full fruition,
Dateless oblivion and divine repose.

XIV

Large glooms were gathered in the mighty fane,
With tinted moongleams slanting here and there;
And all was hush: no swelling organ-strain,
No chant, no voice or murmuring of prayer;
No priests came forth, no tinkling censers fumed,
And the high altar space was unillumed.

Around the pillars and against the walls
Leaned men and shadows; others seemed to brood
Bent or recumbent in secluded stalls.
Perchance they were not a great multitude
Save in that city of so lonely streets
Where one may count up every face he meets.

All patiently awaited the event
Without a stir or sound, as if no less
Self-occupied, doomstricken, while attent.
And then we heard a voice of solemn stress
From the dark pulpit, and our gaze there met
Two eyes which burned as never eyes burned yet:

Two steadfast and intolerable eyes
Burning beneath a broad and rugged brow;
The head behind it of enormous size,
And as black fir-groves in a large wind bow,
Our rooted congregation, gloom-arrayed,
By that great sad voice deep and full were swayed:—

O melancholy Brothers, dark, dark, dark!
O battling in black floods without an ark!
O spectral wanderers of unholy Night!
My soul hath bled for you these sunless years,
With bitter blood-drops running down like tears:

Oh, dark, dark, dark, withdrawn from joy and light!

My heart is sick with anguish for your bale!
Your woe hath been my anguish; yea, I quail
And perish in your perishing unblest,
And I have searched the heights and depths, the scope
Of all our universe, with desperate hope
To find some solace for your wild unrest.

And now at last authentic word I bring,
Witnessed by every dead and living thing;
Good tidings of great joy for you, for all:
There is no God; no Fiend with names divine
Made us and tortures us; if we must pine,
It is to satiate no Being's gall.

It was the dark delusion of a dream,
That living Person conscious and supreme,
Whom we must curse for cursing us with life;
Whom we must curse because the life He gave
Could not be buried in the quiet grave,
Could not be killed by poison or by knife.

This little life is all we must endure,
The grave's most holy peace is ever sure,
We fall asleep and never wake again;
Nothing is of us but the mouldering flesh,
Whose elements dissolve and merge afresh
In earth, air, water, plants, and other men.

We finish thus; and all our wretched race
Shall finish with its cycle, and give place
To other beings, with their own time-doom
Infinite æons ere our kind began;
Infinite æons after the last man
Has joined the mammoth in earth's tomb and womb.

We bow down to the universal laws,
Which never had for man a special clause
Of cruelty or kindness, love or hate:

If toads and vultures are obscene to sight,
If tigers burn with beauty and with might,
Is it by favor or by wrath of fate?

All substance lives and struggles evermore
Through countless shapes continually at war,
By countless interactions interknit:
If one is born a certain day on earth,
All times and forces tended to that birth,
Not all the world could change or hinder it.

I find no hint throughout the Universe
Of good or ill, of blessing or of curse;
I find alone Necessity Supreme;
With infinite Mystery, abysmal, dark,
Unlighted ever by the faintest spark,
For us the flitting shadows of a dream.

O Brothers of sad lives! they are so brief;
A few short years must bring us all relief:
Can we not bear these years of laboring breath?
But if you would not this poor life fulfil,
Lo, you are free to end it when you will,
Without the fear of waking after death.—

The organ-like vibrations of his voice
Thrilled through the vaulted aisles and died away;
The yearning of the tones which bade rejoice
Was sad and tender as a requiem lay:
Our shadowy congregation rested still
As brooding on that "End it when you will."

XV

Wherever men are gathered, all the air
Is charged with human feeling, human thought;
Each shout and cry and laugh, each curse and prayer,
Are into its vibrations surely wrought;
Unspoken passion, wordless meditation,
Are breathed into it with our respiration;
It is with our life fraught and overfraught.

So that no man there breathes earth's simple breath,
As if alone on mountains or wide seas;
But nourishes warm life or hastens death
With joys and sorrows, health and foul disease,
Wisdom and folly, good and evil labors,
Incessant of his multitudinous neighbors;
He in his turn affecting all of these.

That City's atmosphere is dark and dense,
Although not many exiles wander there,
With many a potent evil influence,
Each adding poison to the poisoned air;
Infections of unutterable sadness,
Infections of incalculable madness,
Infections of incurable despair.

XVI

Our shadowy congregation rested still,
As musing on that message we had heard
And brooding on that "End it when you will";
Perchance awaiting yet some other word;
When keen as lightning through a muffled sky
Sprang forth a shrill and lamentable cry:—

The man speaks sooth, alas! the man speaks sooth:
We have no personal life beyond the grave;
There is no God; Fate knows nor wrath nor ruth:
Can I find here the comfort which I crave?

In all eternity I had one chance,
One few years' term of gracious human life:
The splendors of the intellect's advance,
The sweetness of the home with babes and wife;

The social pleasures with their genial wit;
The fascination of the worlds of art,
The glories of the worlds of nature, lit
By large imagination's glowing heart;

The rapture of mere being, full of health;
The careless childhood and the ardent youth,

The strenuous manhood winning various wealth,
The reverend age serene with life's long truth:

All the sublime prerogatives of Man;
The storied memories of the times of old,
The patient tracking of the world's great plan
Through sequences and changes myriadfold.

This chance was never offered me before;
For me the infinite Past is blank and dumb:
This chance recurreth never, nevermore;
Blank, blank for me the infinite To-come.

And this sole chance was frustrate from my birth,
A mockery, a delusion; and my breath
Of noble human life upon this earth
So racks me that I sigh for senseless death.

My wine of life is poison mixed with gall,
My noonday passes in a nightmare dream,
I worse than lose the years which are my all:
What can console me for the loss supreme?

Speak not of comfort where no comfort is,
Speak not at all: can words make foul things fair?
Our life's a cheat, our death a black abyss:
Hush and be mute envisaging despair.—

This vehement voice came from the northern aisle
Rapid and shrill to its abrupt harsh close;
And none gave answer for a certain while,
For words must shrink from these most wordless woes;
At last the pulpit speaker simply said,
With humid eyes and thoughtful drooping head:—

My Brother, my poor Brothers, it is thus;
This life itself holds nothing good for us,
But it ends soon and nevermore can be;
And we knew nothing of it ere our birth,
And shall know nothing when consigned to earth:
I ponder these thoughts and they comfort me.

XVII

How the moon triumphs through the endless nights!
How the stars throb and glitter as they wheel
Their thick processions of supernal lights
Around the blue vault obdurate as steel!
And men regard with passionate awe and yearning
The mighty marching and the golden burning,
And think the heavens respond to what they feel.

Boats gliding like dark shadows of a dream,
Are glorified from vision as they pass
The quivering moonbridge on the deep black stream;
Cold windows kindle their dead glooms of glass
To restless crystals; cornice, dome, and column
Emerge from chaos in the splendor solemn;
Like faëry lakes gleam lawns of dewy grass.

With such a living light these dead eyes shine,
These eyes of sightless heaven, that as we gaze
We read a pity, tremulous, divine,
Or cold majestic scorn in their pure rays:
Fond man! they are not haughty, are not tender;
There is no heart or mind in all their splendor,
They thread mere puppets all their marvellous maze.

If we could near them with the flight unflown,
We should but find them worlds as sad as this,
Or suns all self-consuming like our own
Enringed by planet worlds as much amiss:

They wax and wane through fusion and confusion;
The spheres eternal are a grand illusion,
The empyréan is a void abyss.

XVIII

I wandered in a suburb of the north,
And reached a spot whence three close lanes led down,
Beneath thick trees and hedgerows winding forth
Like deep brook channels, deep and dark and lown:
The air above was wan with misty light,
The dull grey south showed one vague blur of white.

I took the left-hand lane and slowly trod
Its earthen footpath, brushing as I went
The humid leafage; and my feet were shod
With heavy languor, and my frame downbent,
With infinite sleepless weariness outworn,
So many nights I thus had paced forlorn.

After a hundred steps I grew aware
Of something crawling in the lane below;
It seemed a wounded creature prostrate there
That sobbed with pangs in making progress slow,
The hind limbs stretched to push, the fore limbs then
To drag; for it would die in its own den.

But coming level with it I discerned
That it had been a man; for at my tread
It stopped in its sore travail and half-turned,
Leaning upon its right, and raised its head,
And with the left hand twitched back as in ire
Long grey unreverend locks befouled with mire.

A haggard filthy face with bloodshot eyes,
An infamy for manhood to behold.
He gasped all trembling, What, you want my prize?
You leave, to rob me, wine and lust and gold
And all that men go mad upon, since you
Have traced my sacred secret of the clue?

You think that I am weak and must submit;
Yet I but scratch you with this poisoned blade,
And you are dead as if I clove with it
That false fierce greedy heart. Betrayed! betrayed!
I fling this phial if you seek to pass,
And you are forthwith shrivelled up like grass.

And then with sudden change, Take thought! take thought!
Have pity on me! it is mine alone.
If you could find, it would avail you naught;
Seek elsewhere on the pathway of your own:
For who of mortal or immortal race
The lifetrack of another can retrace?

Did you but know my agony and toil!
Two lanes diverge up yonder from this lane;
My thin blood marks the long length of their soil;
Such clue I left, who sought my clue in vain:
My hands and knees are worn both flesh and bone;
I cannot move but with continual moan.

But I am in the very way at last
To find the long-lost broken golden thread
Which reunites my present with my past,
If you but go your own way. And I said,
I will retire as soon as you have told
Whereunto leadeth this lost thread of gold.

And so you know it not! he hissed with scorn;
I feared you, imbecile! It leads me back
From this accursèd night without a morn,
And through the deserts which have else no track,
And through vast wastes of horror-haunted time,
To Eden innocence in Eden's clime:

And I become a nursling soft and pure,
An infant cradled on its mother's knee,

Without a past, love-cherished and secure;
Which if it saw this loathsome present Me,
Would plunge its face into the pillowing breast,
And scream abhorrence hard to lull to rest.

He turned to grope; and I retiring brushed
Thin shreds of gossamer from off my face,
And mused, His life would grow, the germ uncrushed;
He should to antenatal night retrace,
And hide his elements in that large womb
Beyond the reach of man-evolving Doom.

And even thus, what weary way were planned,
To seek oblivion through the far-off gate
Of birth, when that of death is close at hand!
For this is law, if law there be in Fate:
What never has been, yet may have its when;
The thing which has been, never is again.

XIX

The mighty river flowing dark and deep,
With ebb and flood from the remote sea-tides
Vague-sounding through the City's sleepless sleep,
Is named the River of the Suicides;
For night by night some lorn wretch overweary,
And shuddering from the future yet more dreary,
Within its cold secure oblivion hides.

One plunges from a bridge's parapet,
As by some blind and sudden frenzy hurled;
Another wades in slow with purpose set
Until the waters are above him furled;
Another in a boat with dream-like motion
Glides drifting down into the desert ocean,
To starve or sink from out the desert world.

They perish from their suffering surely thus,
For none beholding them attempts to save,
The while each thinks how soon, solicitous,
He may seek refuge in the self-same wave;
Some hour when tired of ever-vain endurance
Impatience will forerun the sweet assurance
Of perfect peace eventual in the grave.

When this poor tragic-farce has palled us long,
Why actors and spectators do we stay?—
To fill our so-short *rôles* out right or wrong;
To see what shifts are yet in the dull play
For our illusion; to refrain from grieving
Dear foolish friends by our untimely leaving:
But those asleep at home, how blest are they!

Yet it is but for one night after all:
What matters one brief night of dreary pain?
When after it the weary eyelids fall
Upon the weary eyes and wasted brain;
And all sad scenes and thoughts and feelings vanish
In that sweet sleep no power can ever banish,
That one best sleep which never wakes again.

XX

I sat me weary on a pillar's base,
And leaned against the shaft; for broad moonlight
O'erflowed the peacefulness of cloistered space,
A shore of shadow slanting from the right:
The great cathedral's western front stood there,
A wave-worn rock in that calm sea of air.

Before it, opposite my place of rest,
Two figures faced each other, large, austere:
A couchant sphinx in shadow to the breast,
An angel standing in the moonlight clear;
So mighty by magnificence of form,
They were not dwarfed beneath that mass enorm.

Upon the cross-hilt of a naked sword
The angel's hands, as prompt to smite, were held;
His vigilant intense regard was poured
Upon the creature placidly unquelled,
Whose front was set at level gaze which took
No heed of aught, a solemn trance-like look.

And as I pondered these opposèd shapes
My eyelids sank in stupor, that dull swoon
Which drugs and with a leaden mantle drapes
The outworn to worse weariness. But soon
A sharp and clashing noise the stillness broke,
And from the evil lethargy I woke.

The angel's wings had fallen, stone on stone,
And lay there shattered; hence the sudden sound:
A warrior leaning on his sword alone
Now watched the sphinx with that regard profound;
The sphinx unchanged looked forthright, as aware
Of nothing in the vast abyss of air.

Again I sank in that repose unsweet,
Again a clashing noise my slumber rent;
The warrior's sword lay broken at his feet:
An unarmed man with raised hands impotent
Now stood before the sphinx, which ever kept
Such mien as if with open eyes it slept.

My eyelids sank in spite of wonder grown;
A louder crash upstartled me in dread:
The man had fallen forward, stone on stone,
And lay there shattered, with his trunkless head
Between the monster's large quiescent paws,
Beneath its grand front changeless as life's laws.

The moon had circled westward full and bright,
And made the temple-front a mystic dream,
And bathed the whole enclosure with its light,
The sworded angel's wrecks, the sphinx supreme:
I pondered long that cold majestic face
Whose vision seemed of infinite void space.

XXI

Anear the centre of that northern crest
Stands out a level upland bleak and bare,
From which the city east and south and west
Sinks gently in long waves; and thronèd there
An Image sits, stupendous, superhuman,
The bronze colossus of a wingèd Woman,
Upon a graded granite base four-square.

Low-seated she leans forward massively,
With cheek on clenched left hand, the forearm's might
Erect, its elbow on her rounded knee;
Across a clasped book in her lap the right
Upholds a pair of compasses; she gazes
With full set eyes, but wandering in thick mazes
Of sombre thought beholds no outward sight.

Words cannot picture her; but all men know
That solemn sketch the pure sad artist wrought
Three centuries and threescore years ago,
With phantasies of his peculiar thought:
The instruments of carpentry and science
Scattered about her feet, in strange alliance
With the keen wolf-hound sleeping undistraught;

Scales, hour-glass, bell, and magic-square above;
The grave and solid infant perched beside,
With open winglets that might bear a dove,
Intent upon its tablets, heavy-eyed;

Her folded wings as of a mighty eagle,
But all too impotent to lift the regal
Robustness of her earth-born strength and pride;

And with those wings, and that light wreath which seems
To mock her grand head and the knotted frown
Of forehead charged with baleful thoughts and dreams,
The household bunch of keys, the housewife's gown
Voluminous, indented, and yet rigid
As if a shell of burnished metal frigid;
The feet thick shod to tread all weakness down;

The comet hanging o'er the waste dark seas,
The massy rainbow curved in front of it,
Beyond the village with the masts and trees;
The snaky imp, dog-headed, from the Pit,
Bearing upon its batlike leathern pinions
Her name unfolded in the sun's dominions,
The "Melencolia" that transcends all wit.

Thus has the artist copied her, and thus
Surrounded to expound her form sublime,
Her fate heroic and calamitous;
Fronting the dreading mysteries of Time,
Unvanquished in defeat and desolation,
Undaunted in the hopeless conflagration
Of the day setting on her baffled prime.

Baffled and beaten back she works on still,
Weary and sick of soul she works the more,
Sustained by her indomitable will;
The hands shall fashion and the brain shall pore
And all her sorrow shall be turned to labor,
Till death the friend-foe piercing with his sabre
That mighty heart of hearts ends bitter war.

But as if blacker night could dawn on night,
With tenfold gloom on moonless night unstarred,
A sense more tragic than defeat and blight,
More desperate than strife with hope debarred,
More fatal than the adamantine Never
Encompassing her passionate endeavor
Dawns glooming in her tenebrous regard:

The sense that every struggle brings defeat
Because Fate holds no prize to crown success;
That all the oracles are dumb or cheat
Because they have no secret to express;
That none can pierce the vast black veil uncertain
Because there is no light beyond the curtain;
That all is vanity and nothingness.

Titanic from her high throne in the north,
That City's sombre Patrŏness and Queen.
In bronze sublimity she gazes forth
Over her Capital of teen and threne,
Over the river with its isles and bridges,
The marsh and moorland, to the stern rock-ridges,
Confronting them with a coëval mien.

The moving moon and stars from east to west
Circle before her in the sea of air;
Shadows and gleams glide round her solemn rest.
Her subjects often gaze up to her there:
The strong to drink new strength of iron endurance,
The weak new terrors; all, renewed assurance
And confirmation of the old despair.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE (1837–1909)

From *ATALANTA IN CALYDON*

(1865)

WHEN THE HOUNDS OF SPRING

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamor of waters, and with might;
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendor and speed of thy feet;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofèd heel of a satyr crushes
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
The Mænad and the Bassarid;
And soft as lips that laugh and hide
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF YEARS

Before the beginning of years,
There came to the making of man

Time, with a gift of tears;
Grief, with a glass that ran;
Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
Summer, with flowers that fell;
Remembrance fallen from heaven,
And madness risen from hell;
Strength without hands to smite;
Love that endures for a breath;
Night, the shadow of light,
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
Fire, and the falling of tears,
And a measure of sliding sand
From under the feet of the years;
And froth and drift of the sea;
And dust of the laboring earth;
And bodies of things to be
In the houses of death and of birth;
And wrought with weeping and laughter
And fashioned with loathing and love,
With life before and after
And death beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span
With travail and heavy sorrow,
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
They gathered as unto strife;
They breathed upon his mouth,
They filled his body with life;

Eyesight and speech they wrought
For the veils of the soul therein,
A time for labor and thought,
A time to serve and to sin;
They gave him light in his ways,
And love, and a space for delight,
And beauty and length of days,
And night, and sleep in the night.
His speech is a burning fire;
With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
Sows, and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.

WE HAVE SEEN THEE, O LOVE

We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair;
thou art goodly, O Love;
Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove.
Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea;
Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.
Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire;
Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire;
And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid;
Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes afraid;
As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath:
But Fate is the name of her; and his name is Death.

NOT AS WITH SUNDERING OF THE EARTH

Not as with sundering of the earth
Nor as with cleaving of the sea
Nor fierce foreshadowings of a birth
Nor flying dreams of death to be,
Nor loosening of a large world's girth
And quickening of the body of night,
And sound of thunder in men's ears
And fire of lightning in men's sight,
Fate, mother of desires and fears,
Bore unto men the law of tears;
But sudden, an unfathered flame,
And broken out of night, she shone,
She, without body, without name,
In days forgotten and foregone;
And heaven rang round her as she came
Like smitten cymbals, and lay bare;
Clouds and great stars, thunders and snows,
The blue sad fields and folds of air,
The life that breathes, the life that grows,
All wind, all fire, that burns or blows,
Even all these knew her: for she is great;
The daughter of doom, the mother of death,
The sister of sorrow; a lifelong weight
That no man's finger lighteneth,
Nor any god can lighten fate;
A landmark seen across the way
Where one race treads as the other trod;
An evil sceptre, an evil stay,
Wrought for a staff, wrought for a rod,
The bitter jealousy of God.

For death is deep as the sea,
And fate as the waves thereof.

Shall the waves take pity on thee
Or the south-wind offer thee love?
Wilt thou take the night for thy day
Or the darkness for light on thy way
Till thou say in thine heart, Enough?

Behold, thou art over fair, thou art over wise;
The sweetness of spring in thine hair, and the light in thine eyes.
The light of the spring in thine eyes, and the sound in thine ears;
Yet thine heart shall wax heavy with sighs and thine eyelids with tears.
Wilt thou cover thine hair with gold; and with silver thy feet?
Hast thou taken the purple to fold thee, and made thy mouth sweet?
Behold, when thy face is made bare, he that loved thee shall hate;
Thy face shall be no more fair at the fall of thy fate.
For thy life shall fall as a leaf and be shed as the rain:
And the veil of thine head shall be grief; and the crown shall be pain.

From "ERECHTHEUS"

(1876)

(Praxithea has seen her daughter Chthonia and her husband Erechtheus both die for the sake of the Athenian state. Now, before her and her companions Pallas Athena descends.)

ATHENA

Hear, men that mourn, and woman without mate,
Hearken; ye sick of soul with fear, and thou
Dumb-stricken for thy children; hear ye too,
Earth, and the glory of heaven, and winds of the air,
And the most holy heart of the deep sea,
Late wrath, now full of quiet; hear thou, sun,
Rolled round with the upper fire of rolling heaven
And all the stars returning; hills and streams,
Springs and fresh fountains, day that seest these deeds,
Night that shalt hide not; and thou child of mine,
Child of a maiden, by a maid redeemed,
Blood-guiltless, though bought back with innocent blood,
City mine own; I Pallas bring thee word,
I virgin daughter of the most high God
Give all you charge and lay command on all
The word I bring be wasted not; for this
The Gods have stablished and his soul hath sworn,
That time nor earth nor changing sons of man
Nor waves of generations, nor the winds
Of ages risen and fallen that steer their tides
Through light and dark of birth and lovelier death
From storm toward haven inviolable, shall see
So great a light alive beneath the sun
As the awless eye of Athens; all fame else
Shall be to her fame as a shadow in sleep
To this wide noon at waking; men most praised
In lands most happy for their children found
Shall hold as highest of honors given of God
To be but likened to the least of thine,
Thy least of all, my city; thine shall be
The crown of all songs sung, of all deeds done,
Thine the full flower for all time; in thine hand
Shall time be like a sceptre, and thine head
Wear worship for a garland; nor one leaf
Shall change or winter cast out of thy crown
Till all flowers wither in the world; thine eyes
Shall first in man's flash lightning liberty,
Thy tongue shall first say freedom; thy first hand
Shall loose the thunder terror as a hound
To hunt from sunset to the springs of the sun
Kings that rose up out of the populous east
To make their quarry of thee, and shall strew
With multitudinous limbs of myriad herds
The foodless pastures of the sea, and make

With wrecks immeasurable and unsummed defeat
One ruin of all their many-folded flocks
Ill shepherded from Asia; by thy side
Shall fight thy son the north wind, and the sea
That was thine enemy shall be sworn thy friend
And hand be struck in hand of his and thine
To hold faith fast for aye; with thee, though each
Make war on other, wind and sea shall keep
Peace, and take truce as brethren for thy sake
Leagued with one spirit and single-hearted strength
To break thy foes in pieces, who shall meet
The wind's whole soul and might of the main sea
Full in their face of battle, and become
A laughter to thee; like a shower of leaves
Shall their long galleys rank by staggering rank
Be dashed adrift on ruin, and in thy sight
The sea deride them, and that lord of the air
Who took by violent hand thy child to wife
With his loud lips bemock them, by his breath
Swept out of sight of being; so great a grace
Shall this day give thee, that makes one in heart
With mine the deep sea's godhead, and his son
With him that was thine helmsman, king with king,
Dead man with dead; such only names as these
Shalt thou call royal, take none else or less
To hold of men in honor; but with me
Shall these be worshipped as one God, and mix
With mine the might of their mysterious names
In one same shrine served singly, thence to keep
Perpetual guard on Athens; time and change,
Masters and lords of all men, shall be made
To thee that knowest no master and no lord
Servants; the days that lighten heaven and nights
That darken shall be ministers of thine
To attend upon thy glory, the great years
As light-engraven letters of thy name
Writ by the sun's hand on the front of the earth
For world-beholden witness; such a gift
For one fair chaplet of three lives enwreathed
To hang for ever from thy storied shrine,
And this thy steersman fallen with tiller in hand
To stand for ever at thy ship's helm seen,
Shall he that bade their threefold flower be shorn
And laid him low that planted, give thee back
In sign of sweet land reconciled with sea
And heavenlike earth with heaven; such promise-pledge
I daughter without mother born of God
To the most woful mother born of man
Plight for continual comfort. Hail, and live
Beyond all human hap of mortal doom
Happy; for so my sire hath sworn and I.

PRAXITHEA

O queen Athena, from a heart made whole
Take as thou givest us blessing; never tear
Shall stain for shame nor groan untune the song
That as a bird shall spread and fold its wings
Here in thy praise for ever, and fulfil
The whole world's crowning city crowned with thee
As the sun's eye fulfils and crowns with sight
The circling crown of heaven. There is no grief
Great as the joy to be made one in will
With him that is the heart and rule of life,
And thee, God born of God, thy name is ours,
And thy large grace more great than our desire.

CHORUS

From the depth of the springs of my spirit a fountain is poured of thanksgiving,
My country, my mother, for thee,
That thy dead for their death shall have life in thy sight and a name everliving
At heart of thy people to be.
In the darkness of change on the waters of time they shall turn from afar
To the beam of this dawn for a beacon, the light of these pyres for a star.
They shall see thee who love and take comfort, who hate thee shall see and take warning,
Our mother that makest us free;
And the sons of thine earth shall have help of the waves that made war on their morning,
And friendship and fame of the sea.

LAUS VENERIS

(1866)

Lors dit en plourant; Hélas trop malheureux homme et mauldict pescheur, oncques ne verrai-je clémence et miséricorde de Dieu. Ores m'en irai-je d'icy et me cacherai dedans le mont Horsel, en requérant de faveur et d'amoureuse merci ma doulce dame Vénus, car pour son amour serai-je bien à tout jamais damné en enfer. Voicy la fin de tous mes faicts d'armes et de toutes mes belles chansons. Hélas, trop belle estoyt la face de ma dame et ses yeulx, et en mauvais jour je vis ces chouses-là. Lors s'en alla tout en gémissant et sé retourna chez elle, et là vescut tristement en grand amour près de sa dame. Puis après advint que le pape vit un jour esclater sur son baston force belles fleurs rouges et blanches et maints boutons de feuilles, et ainsi vit-il reverdir toute l'escorce. Ce dont il eut grande crainte et moult s'en esmut, et grande pitié lui prit de ce chevalier qui s'en estoyt départi sans espoir comme un homme misérable et damné. Doncques envoya force messaigers devers luy pour le ramener, disant qu'il aurait de Dieu grace et bonne absolution de son grand pesché d'amour. Mais oncques plus ne le virent; car toujours demeura ce pauvre chevalier auprès de Vénus la haulte et forte déesse ès flancs de la montagne amoureuse.

Livre des grandes merveilles d'amour, escript en latin et en françoys par Maistre Antoine Gaget. 1530.

Asleep or waking is it? for her neck,
Kissed over close, wears yet a purple speck
Wherein the pained blood falters and goes out;
Soft, and stung softly—fairer for a fleck.

But though my lips shut sucking on the place,
There is no vein at work upon her face;
Her eyelids are so peaceable, no doubt
Deep sleep has warmed her blood through all its ways.

Lo, this is she that was the world's delight;
The old gray years were parcels of her might;
The strewings of the ways wherein she trod
Were the twain seasons of the day and night.

Lo, she was thus when her clear limbs enticed
All lips that now grow sad with kissing Christ,
Stained with blood fallen from the feet of God,
The feet and hands whereat our souls were priced.

Alas, Lord, surely thou art great and fair.
But lo her wonderfully woven hair!
And thou didst heal us with thy piteous kiss;
But see now, Lord; her mouth is lovelier.

She is right fair; what hath she done to thee?
Nay, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine eyes and see;
Had now thy mother such a lip—like this?
Thou knowest how sweet a thing it is to me.

Inside the Horsel here the air is hot;
Right little peace one hath for it, God wot;
The scented dusted daylight burns the air,
And my heart chokes me till I hear it not.

Behold, my Venus, my soul's body, lies
With my love laid upon her garmentwise,

Feeling my love in all her limbs and hair
And shed between her eyelids through her eyes.

She holds my heart in her sweet open hands
Hanging asleep; hard by her head there stands,
Crowned with gilt thorns and clothed with flesh like fire,
Love, wan as foam blown up the salt burnt sands—

Hot as the brackish waifs of yellow spume
That shift and steam—loose clots of arid fume
From the sea's panting mouth of dry desire;
There stands he, like one laboring at a loom.

The warp holds fast across; and every thread
That makes the woof up has dry specks of red;
Always the shuttle cleaves clean through, and he
Weaves with the hair of many a ruined head.

Love is not glad nor sorry, as I deem;
Laboring he dreams, and labors in the dream,
Till when the spool is finished, lo I see
His web, reeled off, curls and goes out like steam.

Night falls like fire; the heavy lights run low,
And as they drop, my blood and body so
Shake as the flame shakes, full of days and hours
That sleep not neither weep they as they go.

Ah yet would God this flesh of mine might be
Where air might wash and long leaves cover me,
Where tides of grass break into foam of flowers,
Or where the wind's feet shine along the sea.

Ah yet would God that stems and roots were bred
Out of my weary body and my head,
That sleep were sealed upon me with a seal,
And I were as the least of all his dead.

Would God my blood were dew to feed the grass,
Mine ears made deaf and mine eyes blind as glass,
My body broken as a turning wheel,
And my mouth stricken ere it saith Alas!

Ah God, that love were as a flower or flame,
That life were as the naming of a name,
That death were not more pitiful than desire,
That these things were not one thing and the same!

Behold now, surely somewhere there is death:
For each man hath some space of years, he saith,
A little space of time ere time expire,
A little day, a little way of breath.

And lo, between the sundawn and the sun,
His day's work and his night's work are undone;
And lo, between the nightfall and the light,
He is not, and none knoweth of such an one.

Ah God, that I were as all souls that be,
As any herb or leaf of any tree,
As men that toil through hours of laboring night,
As bones of men under the deep sharp sea.

Outside it must be winter among men;
For at the gold bars of the gates again
I heard all night and all the hours of it,
The wind's wet wings and fingers drip with rain.

Knights gather, riding sharp for cold; I know
The ways and woods are strangled with the snow;
And with short song the maidens spin and sit
Until Christ's birthnight, lily-like, arow.

The scent and shadow shed about me make
The very soul in all my senses ache;

The hot hard night is fed upon my breath,
And sleep beholds me from afar awake.

Alas, but surely where the hills grow deep,
Or where the wild ways of the sea are steep,
Or in strange places somewhere there is death,
And on death's face the scattered hair of sleep.

There lover-like with lips and limbs that meet
They lie, they pluck sweet fruit of life and eat;
But me the hot and hungry days devour,
And in my mouth no fruit of theirs is sweet.

No fruit of theirs, but fruit of my desire,
For her love's sake whose lips through mine respire;
Her eyelids on her eyes like flower on flower,
Mine eyelids on mine eyes like fire on fire.

So lie we, not as sleep that lies by death,
With heavy kisses and with happy breath;
Not as man lies by woman, when the bride
Laughs low for love's sake and the words he saith,

For she lies, laughing low with love; she lies
And turns his kisses on her lips to sighs,
To sighing sound of lips unsatisfied,
And the sweet tears are tender with her eyes.

Ah, not as they, but as the souls that were
Slain in the old time, having found her fair;
Who, sleeping with her lips upon their eyes,
Heard sudden serpents hiss across her hair.

Their blood runs round the roots of time like rain,
She casts them forth and gathers them again;
With nerve and bone she weaves and multiplies
Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain.

Her little chambers drip with flower-like red,
Her girdles, and the chaplets of her head,
Her armlets and her anklets; with her feet
She tramples all that winepress of the dead.

Her gateways smoke with fume of flowers and fires,
With loves burnt out and unassuaged desires;
Between her lips the steam of them is sweet,
The languor in her ears of many lyres.

Her beds are full of perfume and sad sound,
Her doors are made with music, and barred round
With sighing and with laughter and with tears,
With tears whereby strong souls of men are bound.

There is the knight Adonis that was slain;
With flesh and blood she chains him for a chain;
The body and the spirit in her ears
Cry, for her lips divide him vein by vein.

Yea, all she slayeth; yea, every man save me;
Me, love, thy lover that must cleave to thee
Till the ending of the days and ways of earth,
The shaking of the sources of the sea.

Me, most forsaken of all souls that fell;
Me, satiated with things insatiable;
Me, for whose sake the extreme hell makes mirth,
Yea, laughter kindles at the heart of hell.

Alas thy beauty! for thy mouth's sweet sake
My soul is bitter to me, my limbs quake
As water, as the flesh of men that weep,
As their heart's vein whose heart goes nigh to break.

Ah God, that sleep with flower-sweet finger-tips
Would crush the fruit of death upon my lips;
Ah God, that death would tread the grapes of sleep
And wring their juice upon me as it drips.

There is no change of cheer for many days,
But change of chimes high up in the air, that sways
Rung by the running fingers of the wind;
And singing sorrows heard on hidden ways.

Day smiteth day in twain, night sundereth night,
And on mine eyes the dark sits as the light;
Yea, Lord, thou knowest I know not, having sinned,
If heaven be clean or unclean in thy sight.

Yea, as if earth were sprinkled over me,
Such chafed harsh earth as chokes a sandy sea,
Each pore doth yearn, and the dried blood thereof
Gasps by sick fits, my heart swims heavily,

There is a feverish famine in my veins;
Below her bosom, where a crushed grape stains
The white and blue, there my lips caught and clove
An hour since, and what mark of me remains?

I dare not always touch her, lest the kiss
Leave my lips charred. Yea, Lord, a little bliss,
Brief bitter bliss, one hath for a great sin;
Nathless thou knowest how sweet a thing it is.

Sin, is it sin whereby men's souls are thrust
Into the pit? yet had I a good trust
To save my soul before it slipped therein,
Trod under by the fire-shod feet of lust.

For if mine eyes fail and my soul takes breath,
I look between the iron sides of death
Into sad hell where all sweet love hath end,
All but the pain that never finisheth.

There are the naked faces of great kings,
The singing folk with all their lute-playings;
There when one cometh he shall have to friend
The grave that covets and the worm that clings.

There sit the knights that were so great of hand,
The ladies that were queens of fair green land,
Grown gray and black now, brought unto the dust,
Soiled, without raiment, clad about with sand.

There is one end for all of them; they sit
Naked and sad, they drink the dregs of it,
Trodden as grapes in the wine-press of lust,
Trampled and trodden by the fiery feet.

I see the marvellous mouth whereby there fell
Cities and people whom the gods loved well,
Yet for her sake on them the fire gat hold,
And for their sakes on her the fire of hell.

And softer than the Egyptian lote-leaf is
The queen whose face was worth the world to kiss,
Wearing at breast a suckling snake of gold;
And large pale lips of strong Semiramis.

Curled like a tiger's that curl back to feed;
Red only where the last kiss made them bleed;
Her hair most thick with many a carven gem,
Deep in the mane, great-chested, like a steed.

Yea, with red sin the faces of them shine;
But in all these there was no sin like mine;
No, not in all the strange great sins of them
That made the wine-press froth and foam with wine.

For I was of Christ's choosing, I God's knight,
No blinkard heathen stumbling for scant light;
I can well see, for all the dusty days
Gone past, the clean great time of goodly fight.

I smell the breathing battle sharp with blows,
With shriek of shafts and snapping short of bows;
The fair pure sword smites out in subtle ways,
Sounds and long lights are shed between the rows

Of beautiful mailed men; the edged light slips,
Most like a snake that takes short breath and dips
Sharp from the beautifully bending head,
With all its gracious body lithe as lips

That curl in touching you; right in this wise
My sword doth, seeming fire in mine own eyes,
Leaving all colors in them brown and red
And flecked with death; then the keen breaths like sighs,

The caught-up choked dry laughters following them,
When all the fighting face is grown a flame
For pleasure, and the pulse that stuns the ears,
And the heart's gladness of the goodly game.

Let me think yet a little; I do know
These things were sweet, but sweet such years ago,
Their savor is all turned now into tears;
Yea, ten years since, where the blue ripples blow,

The blue curled eddies of the blowing Rhine,
I felt the sharp wind shaking grass and vine
Touch my blood too, and sting me with delight
Through all this waste and weary body of mine

That never feels clear air; right gladly then
I rode alone, a great way off my men,
And heard the chiming bridle smite and smite,
And gave each rhyme thereof some rhyme again,

Till my song shifted to that iron one;
Seeing there rode up between me and the sun
Some certain of my foe's men, for his three
White wolves across their painted coats did run.

The first red-bearded, with square cheeks —alack,
I made my knave's blood turn his beard to black;
The slaying of him was a joy to see:
Perchance too, when at night he came not back,

Some woman fell a-weeping, whom this thief
Would beat when he had drunken; yet small grief
Hath any for the ridding of such knaves;
Yea, if one wept, I doubt her teen was brief.

This bitter love is sorrow in all lands,
Draining of eyelids, wringing of drenched hands,
Sighing of hearts and filling up of graves;
A sign across the head of the world he stands,

As one that hath a plague-mark on his brows;
Dust and spilt blood do track him to his house
Down under earth; sweet smells of lip and cheek,
Like a sweet snake's breath made more poisonous

With chewing of some perfumed deadly grass,
Are shed all round his passage if he pass,
And their quenched savor leaves the whole soul weak
Sick with keen guessing whence the perfume was.

As one who hidden in deep sedge and reeds
Smells the rare scent made where a panther feeds,
And tracking ever slotwise the warm smell
Is snapped upon by the sweet mouth and bleeds,

His head far down the hot sweet throat of her—
So one tracks love, whose breath is deadlier,
And lo, one springe and you are fast in hell,
Fast as the gin's grip of a wayfarer.

I think now, as the heavy hours decease
One after one, and bitter thoughts increase
One upon one, of all sweet finished things;
The breaking of the battle; the long peace

Wherein we sat clothed softly, each man's hair
Crowned with green leaves beneath white hoods of vair,
The sounds of sharp spears at great tourneyings,
And noise of singing in the late sweet air.

I sang of love, too, knowing nought thereof;
"Sweeter," I said, "the little laugh of love
Than tears out of the eyes of Magdalen,
Or any fallen feather of the Dove.

"The broken little laugh that spoils a kiss,
The ache of purple pulses, and the bliss
Of blinded eyelids that expand again—
Love draws them open with those lips of his,

"Lips that cling hard till the kissed face has grown
Of one same fire and color with their own;
Then ere one sleep, appeased with sacrifice,
Where his lips wounded, there his lips atone."

I sang these things long since and knew them not;
"Lo, here is love, or there is love, God wot,
This man and that finds favor in his eyes,"
I said, "but, I, what guerdon have I got?

"The dust of praise that is blown everywhere
In all men's faces with the common air;
The bay-leaf that wants chafing to be sweet
Before they wind it in a singer's hair."

So that one dawn I rode forth sorrowing;
I had no hope but of some evil thing,
And so rode slowly past the windy wheat,
And past the vineyard and the water-spring,

Up to the Horsel. A great elder-tree
Held back its heaps of flowers to let me see
The ripe tall grass, and one that walked therein,
Naked, with hair shed over to the knee.

She walked between the blossom and the grass;
I knew the beauty of her, what she was,
The beauty of her body and her sin,
And in my flesh the sin of hers, alas!

Alas! for sorrow is all the end of this.
O sad kissed mouth, how sorrowful it is!
O breast whereat some suckling sorrow clings,
Red with the bitter blossom of a kiss!

Ah, with blind lips I felt for you, and found
About my neck your hands and hair enwound,
The hands that stifle and the hair that stings,
I felt them fasten sharply without sound.

Yea, for my sin I had great store of bliss.
Rise up, make answer for me, let thy kiss
Seal my lips hard from speaking of my sin,
Lest one go mad to hear how sweet it is.

Yet I waxed faint with fume of barren bowers,
And murmuring of the heavy-headed hours;
And let the dove's beak fret and peck within
My lips in vain, and Love shed fruitless flowers.

So that God looked upon me when your hands
Were hot about me; yea, God brake my bands

To save my soul alive, and I came forth
Like a man blind and naked in strange lands,

That hears men laugh and weep, and knows not whence
Nor wherefore, but is broken in his sense;
Howbeit I met folk riding from the north
Toward Rome, to purge them of their soul's offence,

And rode with them, and spake to none; the day
Stunned me like lights upon some wizard way,
And ate like fire mine eyes and mine eyesight;
So rode I, hearing all these chant and pray,

And marvelled; till before us rose and fell
White cursèd hills, like outer skirts of hell
Seen where men's eyes look through the day to night,
Like a jagged shell's lips, harsh, untunable,

Blown in between by devils' wrangling breath;
Nathless we won well past that hell and death,
Down to the sweet land where all airs are good,
Even unto Rome where God's grace tarrieth.

Then came each man and worshipped at his knees
Who in the Lord God's likeness bears the keys
To bind or loose, and called on Christ's shed blood,
And so the sweet-souled father gave him ease.

But when I came I fell down at his feet,
Saying, "Father, though the Lord's blood be right sweet,
The spot it takes not off the panther's skin,
Nor shall an Ethiop's stain be bleached with it.

"Lo, I have sinned and have spat out at God,
Wherefore his hand is heavier and his rod
More sharp because of mine exceeding sin,
And all his raiment redder than bright blood

"Before mine eyes; yea, for my sake I wot
The heat of hell is waxen seven times hot
Through my great sin." Then spake he some sweet word,
Giving me cheer; which thing availed me not;

Yea, scarce I wist if such indeed were said;
For when I ceased—lo, as one newly dead
Who hears a great cry out of hell, I heard
The crying of his voice across my head.

"Until this dry shred staff, that hath no whit
Of leaf nor bark, bear blossom and smell sweet,
Seek thou not any mercy in God's sight,
For so long shalt thou be cast out from it."

Yea, what if dried-up stems wax red and green,
Shall that thing be which is not nor has been?
Yea, what if sapless bark wax green and white,
Shall any good fruit grow upon my sin?

Nay, though sweet fruit were plucked of a dry tree,
And though men drew sweet waters of the sea,
There should not grow sweet leaves on this dead stem,
This waste wan body and shaken soul of me.

Yea, though God search it warily enough,
There is not one sound thing in all thereof;
Though he search all my veins through, searching them
He shall find nothing whole therein but love.

For I came home right heavy, with small cheer,
And lo my love, mine own soul's heart, more dear

Than mine own soul, more beautiful than God,
Who hath my being between the hands of her—

Fair still, but fair for no man saving me,
As when she came out of the naked sea
Making the foam as fire whereon she trod,
And as the inner flower of fire was she.

Yea, she laid hold upon me, and her mouth
Clove unto mine as soul to body doth,
And, laughing, made her lips luxurious;
Her hair had smells of all the sunburnt south,

Strange spice and flower, strange savor of crushed fruit,
And perfume the swart kings tread underfoot
For pleasure when their minds wax amorous,
Charred frankincense and grated sandal-root.

And I forgot fear and all weary things,
All ended prayers and perished thanksgivings,
Feeling her face with all her eager hair
Cleave to me, clinging as a fire that clings

To the body and to the raiment, burning them;
As after death I know that such-like flame
Shall cleave to me forever; yea, what care,
Albeit I burn then, having felt the same?

Ah love, there is no better life than this;
To have known love, how bitter a thing it is,
And afterward be cast out of God's sight;
Yea, these that know not, shall they have such bliss

High up in barren heaven before his face
As we twain in the heavy-hearted place,
Remembering love and all the dead delight,
And all that time was sweet with for a space?

For till the thunder in the trumpet be,
Soul may divide from body, but not we
One from another; I hold thee with my hand,
I let mine eyes have all their will of thee,

I seal myself upon thee with my might,
Abiding alway out of all men's sight
Until God loosen over sea and land
The thunder of the trumpets of the night.

A BALLAD OF LIFE

(1866)

I found in dreams a place of wind and flowers,
Full of sweet trees and color of glad grass,
In midst whereof there was
A lady clothed like summer with sweet hours.
Her beauty, fervent as a fiery moon,
Made my blood burn and swoon
Like a flame rained upon.
Sorrow had filled her shaken eyelids blue,
And her mouth's sad red heavy rose all through
Seemed sad with glad things gone.

She held a little cithern by the strings,
Shaped heartwise, strung with subtle-colored hair
Of some dead lute player
That in dead years had done delicious things.
The seven strings were named accordingly;
The first string charity,
The second tenderness,
The rest were pleasure, sorrow, sleep, and sin,
And loving kindness, that is pity's kin
And is most pitiless.

There were three men with her, each garmented
With gold and shod with gold upon the feet;
And with plucked ears of wheat.
The first man's hair was wound upon his head:
His face was red, and his mouth curled and sad;
All his gold garment had
Pale stains of dust and rust.
A riven hood was pulled across his eyes;

The token of him being upon this wise
Made for a sign of Lust.

The next was Shame, with hollow heavy face
Colored like green wood when flame kindles it.
He hath such feeble feet
They may not well endure in any place.
His face was full of gray old miseries,
And all his blood's increase
Was even increase of pain.
The last was Fear, that is akin to Death;
He is Shame's friend, and always as Shame saith
Fear answers him again.

My soul said in me; This is marvellous,
Seeing the air's face is not so delicate
Nor the sun's grace so great,
If sin and she be kin or amorous.
And seeing where maidens served her on their knees
I bade one crave of these
To know the cause thereof.
Then Fear said: I am Pity that was dead.
And Shame said: I am Sorrow comforted.
And Lust said: I am Love.

Thereat her hands began a lute-playing
And her sweet mouth a song in a strange tongue;
And all the while she sung
There was no sound but long tears following
Long tears upon men's faces, waxen white
With extreme sad delight.
But those three following men
Became as men raised up among the dead;
Great glad mouths open, and fair cheeks made red
With child's blood come again.

Then I said: Now assuredly I see
My lady is perfect, and transfigureth
All sin and sorrow and death,
Making them fair as her own eyelids be,
Or lips wherein my whole soul's life abides;
Or as her sweet white sides
And bosom carved to kiss.
Now therefore, if her pity further me,
Doubtless for her sake all my days shall be
As righteous as she is.

Forth, ballad, and take roses in both arms,
Even till the top rose touch thee in the throat
Where the least thornprick harms;
And girdled in thy golden singing-coat,
Come thou before my lady and say this;
Borgia, thy gold hair's color burns in me,
Thy mouth makes beat my blood in feverish rhymes;
Therefore so many as these roses be,
Kiss me so many times.
Then it may be, seeing how sweet she is,
That she will stoop herself none otherwise
Than a blown vine-branch doth,
And kiss thee with soft laughter on thine eyes,
Ballad, and on thy mouth.

MADONNA MIA

(1866)

Under green apple-boughs
That never a storm will rouse,
My day hath her house
Between two bowers;
In either of the twain,
Red roses full of rain;
She hath for bondwomen
All kind of flowers.

She hath no handmaid fair
To draw her curled gold hair
Through rings of gold that bear
Her whole hair's weight;
She hath no maids to stand
Gold-clothed on either hand:
In all the great green land
None is so great.

She hath no more to wear
But one white hood of vair
Drawn over eyes and hair,
Wrought with strange gold
Made for some great queen's head,
Some fair great queen since dead;
And one strait gown of red
Against the cold.

Beneath her eyelids deep
Love lying seems asleep,
Love, swift to wake, to weep,
To laugh, to gaze;
Her breasts are like white birds,
And all her gracious words

As water-cress to herds
  In the June-days.

To her all dews that fall
And rains are musical;
Her flowers are fed from all,
  Her joy from these;
In the deep-feathered firs
Their gift of joy is hers,
In the least breath that stirs
  Across the trees.

She grows with greenest leaves,
Ripens with reddest sheaves,
Forgets, remembers, grieves,
  And is not sad;
The quiet lands and skies
Leave light upon her eyes:
None knows her, weak or wise,
  Or tired or glad.

None knows, none understands,
What flowers are like her hands;
Though you should search all lands
  Wherein time grows,
What snows are like her feet,
Though his eyes burn with heat
Through gazing on my sweet,
  Yet no man knows.

Only this thing is said:
That white and gold and red,
God's three chief words, man's bread
  And oil and wine,
Were given her for dowers,
And kingdom of all hours,
And grace of goodly flowers
  And various vine.

This is my lady's praise:
God after many days
Wrought her in unknown ways,
  In sunset lands.
This was my lady's birth:
God gave her might and mirth,
And laid his whole sweet earth
  Between her hands.

Under deep apple-boughs
My lady hath her house;
She wears upon her brows
  The flower thereof;
All saying but what God saith
To her is as vain breath;
She is more strong than death,
  Being strong as love.

ILICET

(1866)

There is an end of joy and sorrow;
Peace all day long, all night, all morrow,
  But never a time to laugh or weep.
The end is come to pleasant places,
The end of tender words and faces,
  The end of all, the poppied sleep.

No place for sound within their hearing,
No room to hope, no time for fearing,
  No lips to laugh, no lids for tears.
The old years have run out all their measure;
No chance of pain, no chance of pleasure,
  No fragment of the broken years.

Outside of all the worlds and ages,
There where the fool is as the sage is,
  There where the slayer is clean of blood,
No end, no passage, no beginning,
There where the sinner leaves off sinning,
  There where the good man is not good.

There is not one thing with another,
But evil saith to Good: My brother,
  My brother, I am one with thee:
They shall not strive nor cry forever:
No man shall choose between them: never
  Shall this thing end and that thing be.

Wind wherein seas and stars are shaken
Shall shake them, and they shall not waken:
  None that has lain down shall arise;
The stones are sealed across their places;
One shadow is shed on all their faces,
  One blindness cast on all their eyes.

Sleep, is it sleep perchance that covers
Each face, as each face were his lover's?
  Farewell; as men that sleep fare well.
The grave's mouth laughs unto derision,
Desire and dread and dream and vision,
  Delight of heaven and sorrow of hell.

No soul shall tell nor lip shall number
The names and tribes of you that slumber;
  No memory, no memorial.
"Thou knowest"—who shall say thou knowest
There is none highest and none lowest:
  An end, an end, an end of all.

Good night, good sleep, good rest from sorrow,

To these that shall not have good morrow;
The gods be gentle to all these.
Nay, if death be not, how shall they be?
Nay, is there help in heaven? it may be
All things and lords of things shall cease.

The stooped urn, filling, dips and flashes;
The bronzèd brims are deep in ashes;
The pale old lips of death are fed.
Shall this dust gather flesh hereafter?
Shall one shed tears or fall to laughter,
At sight of all these poor old dead?

Nay, as thou wilt; these know not of it;
Thine eye's strong weeping shall not profit,
Thy laughter shall not give thee ease;
Cry aloud, spare not, cease not crying,
Sigh, till thou cleave thy sides with sighing,
Thou shalt not raise up one of these.

Burnt spices flash, and burnt wine hisses,
The breathing flame's mouth curls and kisses
The small dried rows of frankincense;
All round the sad red blossoms smoulder,
Flowers colored like the fire, but colder,
In sign of sweet things taken hence;

Yea, for their sake and in death's favor
Things of sweet shape and of sweet savor
We yield them, spice and flower and wine;
Yea, costlier things than wine or spices,
Whereof none knoweth how great the price is,
And fruit that comes not of the vine.

From boy's pierced throat and girl's pierced bosom
Drips, reddening round the blood-red blossom,
The slow delicious bright soft blood,
Bathing the spices and the pyre,
Bathing the flowers and fallen fire,
Bathing the blossom by the bud.

Roses whose lips the flame has deadened
Drink till the lapping leaves are reddened
And warm wet inner petals weep;
The flower whereof sick sleep gets leisure,
Barren of balm and purple pleasure,
Fumes with no native steam of sleep.

Why will ye weep? what do ye weeping?
For waking folk and people sleeping,
And sands that fill and sands that fall,
The days rose-red, the poppied hours,
Blood, wine, and spice and fire and flowers,
There is one end of one and all.

Shall such an one lend love or borrow?
Shall these be sorry for thy sorrow?
Shall these give thanks for words or breath?
Their hate is as their loving-kindness;
The frontlet of their brows is blindness,
The armlet of their arms is death.

Lo, for no noise or light of thunder
Shall these grave-clothes be rent in sunder,
He that hath taken, shall he give?
He hath rent them: shall he bind together?
He hath bound them: shall he break the tether?
He hath slain them: shall he bid them live?

A little sorrow, a little pleasure,
Fate metes us from the dusty measure
That holds the date of all of us;
We are born with travail and strong crying,
And from the birthday to the dying
The likeness of our life is thus.

One girds himself to serve another,
Whose father was the dust, whose mother
The little dead red worm therein;
They find no fruit of things they cherish;
The goodness of a man shall perish,
It shall be one thing with his sin.

In deep wet ways by gray old gardens
Fed with sharp spring the sweet fruit hardens;
They know not what fruits wane or grow;
Red summer burns to the utmost ember;
They know not, neither can remember,
The old years and flowers they used to know.

Ah, for their sakes, so trapped and taken,
For theirs, forgotten and forsaken,
Watch, sleep not, gird thyself with prayer.
Nay, where the heart of wrath is broken,
Where long love ends as a thing spoken,
How shall thy crying enter there?

Though the iron sides of the old world falter
The likeness of them shall not alter
For all the rumor of periods,
The stars and seasons that come after,
The tears of latter men, the laughter
Of the old unalterable gods.

Far up above the years and nations,
The high gods, clothed and crowned with patience,
Endure through days of death-like date;
They bear the witness of things hidden;
Before their eyes all life stands chidden,
As they before the eyes of Fate.

Not for their love shall Fate retire,
Nor they relent for our desire,
Nor the graves open for their call.
The end is more than joy and anguish,
Than lives that laugh and lives that languish,
The poppied sleep, the end of all.

A LEAVE-TAKING

(1866)

Let us go hence, my songs: she will not hear.
Let us go hence together without fear;
Keep silence now, for singing-time is over,
And over all old things and all things dear.
She loves not you nor me as all we love her.
Yea, though we sang as angels in her ear,
She would not hear.

Let us rise up and part; she will not know.
Let us go seaward as the great winds go,
Full of blown sand and foam; what help is here?
There is no help, for all these things are so,
And all the world is bitter as a tear.
And how these things are, though ye strove to show,
She would not know.

Let us go home and hence: she will not weep.
We gave love many dreams and days to keep,
Flowers without scent, and fruits that would not grow,
Saying, "If thou wilt, thrust in thy sickle, and reap."
All is reaped now; no grass is left to mow:
And we that sowed, though all we fell on sleep,
She would not weep.

Let us go hence and rest: she will not love,
She shall not hear us if we sing hereof,
Nor see love's ways, how sore they are and steep.
Come hence, let be, lie still; it is enough.
Love is a barren sea, bitter and deep;
And though she saw all heaven in flower above,
She would not love.

Let us give up, go down: she will not care.
Though all the stars made gold of all the air,
And the sea moving saw before it move
One moon-flower making all the foam-flowers fair;
Though all those waves went over us, and drove
Deep down the stifling lips and drowning hair,
She would not care.

Let us go hence, go hence: she will not see.
Sing all once more together; surely she,
She too, remembering days and words that were,
Will turn a little toward us, sighing; but we,
We are hence, we are gone, as though we had not been there.
Nay, and though all men seeing had pity on me,
She would not see.

BEFORE DAWN

(1866)

Sweet life, if life were stronger,
Earth clear of years that wrong her,
Then two things might live longer,
Two sweeter things than they;
Delight, the rootless flower,
And love, the bloomless bower;
Delight that lives an hour,
And love that lives a day.

From evensong to daytime,
When April melts in Maytime,
Love lengthens out his playtime,
  Love lessens breath by breath,
And kiss by kiss grows older
On listless throat or shoulder
Turned sideways now, turned colder
  Than life that dreams of death.

This one thing once worth giving
Life gave, and seemed worth living;
Sin sweet beyond forgiving
  And brief beyond regret:
To laugh and love together
And weave with foam and feather
And wind and words the tether
  Our memories play with yet.

Ah, one thing worth beginning,
One thread in life worth spinning,
Ah sweet, one sin worth sinning
  With all the whole soul's will;
To lull you till one stilled you,
To kiss you till one killed you,
To feed you till one filled you,
  Sweet lips, if love could fill;

To hunt sweet Love and lose him
Between white arms and bosom,
Between the bud and blossom,
  Between your throat and chin;
To say of shame—what is it?
Of virtue—we can miss it,
Of sin—we can but kiss it,
  And it's no longer sin:

To feel the strong soul, stricken
Through fleshly pulses, quicken
Beneath sweet sighs that thicken,
  Soft hands and lips that smite;
Lips that no love can tire,
With hands that sting like fire,
Weaving the web Desire
  To snare the bird Delight.

But love so lightly plighted,
Our love with torch unlighted,
Paused, near us unaffrighted,
  Who found and left him free;
None, seeing us cloven in sunder,
Will weep or laugh or wonder;
Light love stands clear of thunder,
  And safe from winds at sea.

As, when late larks give warning
Of dying lights and dawning,
Night murmurs to the morning,
  "Lie still, O love, lie still;"
And half her dark limbs cover
The white limbs of her lover,
With amorous plumes that hover
  And fervent lips that chill;

As scornful day represses
Night's void and vain caresses,
And from her cloudier tresses
  Unwinds the gold of his,
With limbs from limbs dividing
And breath by breath subsiding;
For love has no abiding,
  But dies before the kiss;

So hath it been, so be it;
For who shall live and flee it?
But look that no man see it
  Or hear it unaware;
Lest all who love and choose him
See Love, and so refuse him;
For all who find him lose him,
  But all have found him fair.

HYMN TO PROSERPINE

(1866)

(AFTER THE PROCLAMATION IN ROME OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH)

Vicisti, Galilæe

I have lived long enough, having seen one thing, that love hath an end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the seasons that laugh or that weep;
For these give joy and sorrow; but thou, Proserpina, sleep.
Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of the dove,
But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love.
Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harpstring of gold,
A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold?
I am sick of singing; the bays burn deep and chafe: I am fain
To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain.
For the Gods we know not of, who give us our daily breath,
We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as death.

O Gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day!
From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your chains, men say.
New Gods are crowned in the city, their flowers have broken your rods;
They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate Gods.
But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare;
Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.
Time and the Gods are at strife: ye dwell in the midst thereof,
Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.
I say to you, cease, take rest; yea, I say to you all, be at peace,
Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall cease.
Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? but these thou shalt not take,
The laurel, the palms and the pæan, the breast of the nymphs in the brake;
Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath;
And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death;
All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker like fire.
More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these things?
Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.
A little while and we die; shall life not thrive as it may?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.
And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears:
Why should he labor, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years?
Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from thy breath:
We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fulness of death.
Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.
Sleep, shall we sleep after all? for the world is not sweet in the end;
For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.
Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides;
But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the foam of the tides.
O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods!
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,
I kneel not, neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.
All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast
Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past:
Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between the remote sea-gates,
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits:
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas as with wings,
And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of unspeakable things,
White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curled,
Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the world.
The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the storms flee away;
In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and snared as a prey;
In its sides is the north-wind bound; and its salt is of all men's tears;
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse of years;
With travail of day after day, and with trouble of hour upon hour;
And bitter as blood is the spray; and the crests are as fangs that devour:
And its vapor and storm of its steam as the sighing of spirits to be;
And its noise as the noise in a dream; and its depth as the roots of the sea:
And the height of its heads as the height of the utmost stars of the air:
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof tremble, and time is made bare.
Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye chasten the high sea with rods?
Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is older than all ye Gods?
All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass and be past;
Ye are Gods, and behold ye shall die, and the waves be upon you at last.

In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the changes of things,
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget you for kings.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou being dead art a God,
Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen, and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to thee dead.
Of the maiden thy mother, men sing as a goddess with grace clad around;
Thou art throned where another was king; where another was queen she is crowned.
Yea, once we had sight of another: but now she is queen, say these.
Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom of flowering seas,
Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and fair as the foam,
And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess and mother of Rome.
For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow; but ours,
Her deep hair heavily laden with odor and color of flowers,
White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendor, a flame,
Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name.
For thine came weeping, a slave among slaves, and rejected; but she
Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot on the sea,
And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the viewless ways,
And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the bays.
Ye are fallen, our lords by what token? We wist that ye should not fall.
Ye were all so fair that are broken; and one more fair than ye all.
But I turn to her still, having seen she shall surely abide in the end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and blossom of birth,
I am also, I also, thy brother; I go as I came unto earth.
In the night were thine eyes as moons are in heaven, the night where thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the night,
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of Gods from afar
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul of a star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod by the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place, and forget what is done and undone.
Thou art more than the Gods who number the days of our temporal breath;
For these give labor and slumber; but thou, Proserpina, death.
Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in silence. I know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they sleep; even so.
For the glass of the year is brittle wherein we gaze for a span;
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.[1]
So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep.
For there is no God found stronger than death; and death is a sleep.

✓ A MATCH

(1866)

If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
In sad or singing weather,
Blown fields or flowerful closes,
Green pleasure or gray grief;
If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune,
With double sound and single
Delight our lips would mingle,
With kisses glad as birds are
That get sweet rain at noon;
If I were what the words are
And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death,

[1] ψυχάριον εἶ βαστάζον νεκρόν. EPICTETUS.

We'd shine and snow together
Ere March made sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling
And hours of fruitful breath;
If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy,
We'd play for lives and seasons
With loving looks and treasons
And tears of night and morrow
And laughs of maid and boy;
If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for days with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
And night were bright like day;
If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down love together,
Pluck out his flying-feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
And find his mouth a rein;
If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain.

A BALLAD OF BURDENS

(1866)

The burden of fair women. Vain delight,
And love self-slain in some sweet shameful way,
And sorrowful old age that comes by night
As a thief comes that has no heart by day,
And change that finds fair cheeks and leaves them gray,
And weariness that keeps awake for hire,
And grief that says what pleasure used to say;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bought kisses. This is sore,
A burden without fruit in childbearing;
Between the nightfall and the dawn threescore,
Threescore between the dawn and evening.
The shuddering in thy lips, the shuddering
In thy sad eyelids tremulous like fire,
Makes love seem shameful and a wretched thing.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sweet speeches. Nay, kneel down,
Cover thy head, and weep; for verily
These market-men that buy thy white and brown
In the last days shall take no thought for thee.
In the last days like earth thy face shall be,
Yea, like sea-marsh made thick with brine and mire,
Sad with sick leavings of the sterile sea.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of long living. Thou shalt fear
Waking, and sleeping mourn upon thy bed;
And say at night, "Would God the day were here,"
And say at dawn "Would God the day were dead."
With weary days thou shalt be clothed and fed,
And wear remorse of heart for thine attire,
Pain for thy girdle and sorrow upon thine head;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bright colors. Thou shalt see
Gold tarnished, and the gray above the green;
And as the thing thou seest thy face shall be,
And no more as the thing beforetime seen.
And thou shalt say of mercy "It hath been,"
And living, watch the old lips and loves expire,
And talking, tears shall take thy breath between.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sad sayings. In that day
Thou shalt tell all thy days and hours, and tell

Thy times and ways and words of love, and say
How one was dear and one desirable,
And sweet was life to hear and sweet to smell,
But now with lights reverse the old hours retire
And the last hour is shod with fire from hell.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of four seasons. Rain in spring,
White rain and wind among the tender trees;
A summer of green sorrows gathering,
Rank autumn in a mist of miseries,
With sad face set towards the year, that sees
The charred ash drop out of the dropping pyre,
And winter wan with many maladies;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of dead faces. Out of sight
And out of love, beyond the reach of hands,
Changed in the changing of the dark and light,
They walk and weep about the barren lands
Where no seed is nor any garner stands,
Where in short breaths the doubtful days respire,
And time's turned glass lets through the sighing sands;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of much gladness. Life and lust
Forsake thee, and the face of thy delight;
And underfoot the heavy hour strews dust;
And overhead strange weathers burn and bite;
And where the red was, lo, the bloodless white,
And where truth was, the likeness of a liar,
And where day was, the likeness of the night;
This is the end of every man's desire.

ENVOI

Princes, and ye whom pleasure quickeneth,
Heed well this rhyme before your pleasure tire;
For life is sweet, but after life is death.
This is the end of every man's desire.

IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

(1866)

Back to the flower-town, side by side,
The bright months bring,
New-born, the bridegroom and the bride,
Freedom and spring.

The sweet land laughs from sea to sea,
Filled full of sun;
All things come back to her, being free,—
All things but one.

In many a tender wheaten plot
Flowers that were dead
Live, and old suns revive; but not
That holier head.

By this white wandering waste of sea,
Far north, I hear
One face shall never turn to me
As once this year;

Shall never smile and turn and rest
On mine as there,
Nor one most sacred hand be pressed
Upon my hair.

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,
Half run before;
The youngest to the oldest singer
That England bore.

I found him whom I shall not find
Till all grief end,
In holiest age our mightiest mind,
Father and friend.

But thou, if anything endure,
If hope there be,
O spirit that man's life left pure,
Man's death set free,

Not with disdain of days that were
Look earthward now:
Let dreams revive the reverend hair,
The imperial brow;

Come back in sleep, for in the life
Where thou art not
We find none like thee. Time and strife
And the world's lot

Move thee no more; but love at least,
And reverent heart,
May move thee, royal and released
Soul, as thou art.

And thou, his Florence, to thy trust
Receive and keep,
Keep safe his dedicated dust,
His sacred sleep.

So shall thy lovers, come from far,
Mix with thy name
As morning-star with evening-star
His faultless fame.

THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE

(1866)

Here, where the world is quiet,
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams;
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
And men that laugh and weep
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow to reap.
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbor,
And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labor,
Weak ships and spirits steer;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither;
But no such winds blow hither,
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes,
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born;
Forgets the earth her mother,
The life of fruits and corn;
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow
Where summer song rings hollow
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things;
Dead dreams of days forsaken,
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,
And joy was never sure;
To-day will die to-morrow
Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;

That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light:
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight:
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal;
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

LOVE AT SEA

(1866)

We are in love's land to-day;
Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
Or sail or row?
There's many a wind and way,
And never a May but May;
We are in love's hand to-day;
Where shall we go?

Our landwind is the breath
Of sorrows kissed to death
And joys that were:
Our ballast is a rose;
Our way lies where God knows
And love knows where.
We are in love's hand to-day—

Our seamen are fledged Loves,
Our masts are bills of doves,
Our decks fine gold;
Our ropes are dead maids' hair,
Our stores are love-shafts fair
And manifold.
We are in love's land to-day—

Where shall we land you, sweet?
On fields of strange men's feet,
Or fields near home?
Or where the fire-flowers blow,
Or where the flowers of snow
Or flowers of foam?
We are in love's hand to-day—

Land me, she says, where love
Shows but one shaft, one dove,
One heart, one hand.
—A shore like that, my dear,
Lies where no man will steer,
No maiden land.

Imitated from Théophile Gautier.

SAPPHICS

(1866)

All the night sleep came not upon my eyelids,
Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a feather,
Yet with lips shut close and with eyes of iron
Stood and beheld me.

Then to me so lying awake a vision
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,
Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I too,
Full of the vision,

Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
Saw the hair unbound, and the feet unsandalled
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
Saw the reluctant

Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,
Looking always, looking with necks reverted,
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder
Shone Mitylene;

Heard the flying feet of the Loves behind her
Make a sudden thunder upon the waters,
As the thunder flung from the strong unclosing
Wings of a great wind.

So the goddess fled from her place, with awful
Sound of feet and thunder of wings around her;
While behind a clamor of singing women
Severed the twilight.

Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion!
All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish,
Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;
Fear was upon them,

While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.

Ah, the tenth, the Lesbian! the nine were silent,
None endured the sound of her song for weeping;
Laurel by laurel,

Faded all their crowns; but about her forehead,
Round her woven tresses and ashen temples
White as dead snow, paler than grass in summer,
Ravaged with kisses,

Shone a light of fire as a crown for ever.
Yea, almost the implacable Aphrodite
Paused, and almost wept; such a song was that song;
Yea, by her name too

Called her, saying, "Turn to me, O my Sappho";
Yet she turned her face from the Loves, she saw not
Tears or laughter darken immortal eyelids,
Heard not about her

Fearful fitful wings of the doves departing,
Saw not how the bosom of Aphrodite
Shook with weeping, saw not her shaken raiment,
Saw not her hands wrung;

Saw the Lesbians kissing across their smitten
Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound of lute-strings,
Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand, her chosen,
Fairer than all men;

Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,
Full of songs and kisses and little whispers,
Full of music; only beheld among them
Soar, as a bird soars

Newly fledged, her visible song, a marvel,
Made of perfect sound and exceeding passion,
Sweetly shapen, terrible, full of thunders,
Clothed with the wind's wings.

Then rejoiced she, laughing with love, and scattered
Roses, awful roses of holy blossom;

Then the Loves thronged sadly with hidden faces
Round Aphrodite,

Then the Muses, stricken at heart, were silent;
Yea, the gods waxed pale; such a song was that song.
All reluctant, all with a fresh repulsion,
Fled from before her.

All withdrew long since, and the land was barren,
Full of fruitless women and music only.
Now perchance, when winds are assuaged at sunset,
Lulled at the dewfall,

By the gray sea-side, unassuaged, unheard of,
Unbeloved, unseen in the ebb of twilight,
Ghosts of outcast women return lamenting,
Purged not in Lethe,

Clothed about with flame and with tears, and singing
Songs that move the heart of the shaken heaven,
Songs that break the heart of the earth with pity,
Hearing, to hear them.

HERTHA[1]

(1871)

I am that which began;
Out of me the years roll;
Out of me God and man;
I am equal and Whole;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,
Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-colored fruit of my branches, I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam;
Out of me are the forces

[1] The name of an earth-goddess of the ancient Germans.

That save it or damn;
Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird; before God was, I am.

Beside or above me
Nought is there to go;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves;
I am stricken, and I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
My spirit elate;
That which caresses
With hands uncreate
My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
Looking Godward, to cry
"I am I, thou art thou,
I am low, thou art high?"
I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him; find thou but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
The plough-cloven clod
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
The germ and the sod,
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee
Child, underground?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou hast seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me?
Hath the wilderness told it thee?
Hast thou learnt of the sea?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?
What was, hast thou known?
Prophet nor poet
Nor tripod nor throne
Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy mother alone.

Mother not maker,
Born, and not made;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
As my soul in thee saith,
Give thou as I gave thee,
Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labor, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
As mine were to thee;
The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,

Were the lights ye see vanish meant
Alway to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshining the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: ye shall live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion
That take and that give,
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off: they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark:
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,
And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Makes utterance of me;
In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,
And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and branches are bent with his tread.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And stream-riven heights,
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of storm-clouds on earth-shaking nights;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands
In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,
All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or death worms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite lands and of seas.

In the spring-colored hours
When my mind was as May's,
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood, shot out from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots;
And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;
I have need not of prayer;
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air;

That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faith ye espouse;
In me only the root is
That blooms in your boughs;
Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses ador'd,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Toward Gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you; look forth now and see.

Lo, wing'd with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with the terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,
His anguish is here;
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown gray from his fear;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom:
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky;
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I.

THE PILGRIMS

(1871)

"Who is your lady of love, O ye that pass
Singing? and is it for sorrow of that which was
That ye sing sadly, or dream of what shall be?
For gladly at once and sadly it seems ye sing."
—"Our lady of love by you is unbeholden
For hands she hath none, nor eyes, nor lips, nor golden
Treasure of hair, nor face nor form; But we
That love, we know her more fair than any thing."

—"Is she a queen, having great gifts to give?"
—"Yea, these: that whoso hath seen her shall not live
Except he serve her sorrowing, with strange pain,
Travail and bloodshedding and bitterer tears;
And when she bids die he shall surely die.
And he shall leave all things under the sky,
And go forth naked under sun and rain,
And work and wait and watch out all his years."

—"Hath she on earth no place of habitation?"
—"Age to age calling, nation answering nation,
Cries out, Where is she? and there is none to say;
For if she be not in the spirit of men,
For if in the inward soul she hath no place,
In vain they cry unto her, seeking her face,
In vain their mouths make much of her; for they
Cry with vain tongues, till the heart lives again."

—"O ye that follow, and have ye no repentance?
For on your brows is written a mortal sentence,
An hieroglyph of sorrow, a fiery sign,
That in your lives ye shall not pause or rest,
Nor have the sure sweet common love, nor keep
Friends and safe days, nor joy of life nor sleep."
—"These have we not, who have one thing, the divine
Face and clear eyes of faith and fruitful breast."

—"And ye shall die before your thrones be won."
—"Yea, and the changed world and the liberal sun
Shall move and shine without us, and we lie
Dead; but if she too move on earth, and live,
But if the old world with all the old irons rent
Laugh and give thanks, shall we be not content?
Nay, we shall rather live, we shall not die,
Life being so little, and death so good to give."

—"And these men shall forget you."—"Yea, but we
Shall be a part of the earth and the ancient sea,
And heaven-high air august, and awful fire,
And all things good; and no man's heart shall beat
But somewhat in it of our blood once shed
Shall quiver and quicken, as now in us the dead
Blood of men slain and the old same life's desire
Plants in their fiery footprints our fresh feet."

—"But ye that might be clothed with all things pleasant,
Ye are foolish that put off the fair soft present,
That clothe yourselves with the cold future air;
When mother and father and tender sister and brother
And the old live love that was shall be as ye,
Dust, and no fruit of loving life shall be."
—"She shall be yet who is more than all these were,
Than sister or wife or father unto us or mother."

—"Is this worth life, is this, to win for wages?
Lo, the dead mouths of the awful gray-grown ages,
The venerable, in the past that is their prison,
In the outer darkness, in the unopening grave,
Laugh, knowing how many as ye now say have said,
How many, and all are fallen, are fallen and dead:
Shall ye dead rise, and these dead have not risen?"
—"Not we but she, who is tender, and swift to save."

—"Are ye not weary and faint not by the way,
Seeing night by night devoured of day by day,
Seeing hour by hour consumed in sleepless fire?
Sleepless; and ye too, when shall ye too sleep?"
—"We are weary in heart and head, in hands and feet,
And surely more than all things sleep were sweet,—
Than all things save the inexorable desire
Which whoso knoweth shall neither faint nor weep."

—"Is this so sweet that one were fain to follow?
Is this so sure where all men's hopes are hollow,
Even this your dream, that by much tribulation
Ye shall make whole flawed hearts, and bowed necks straight?"
—"Nay, though our life were blind, our death were fruitless,
Not therefore were the whole world's high hope rootless;
But man to man, nation would turn to nation,
And the old life live, and the old great word be great."

—"Pass on, then, and pass by us, and let us be,
For what light think ye after life to see?
And if the world fare better will ye know?
And if man triumph who shall seek you and say?"
—"Enough of light is this for one life's span,
That all men born are mortal, but not man;
And we men bring death lives by night to sow,
That men may reap and eat and live by day."

TO WALT WHITMAN IN AMERICA

(1871)

Send but a song oversea for us,
Heart of their hearts who are free,
Heart of their singer, to be for us
More than our singing can be;
Ours, in the tempest at error,
With no light but the twilight of terror;
Send us a song oversea!

Sweet-smelling of pine leaves and grasses,
And blown as a tree through and through
With the winds of the keen mountain-passes,
And tender as sun-smitten dew;
Sharp-tongued as the winter that shakes
The wastes of your limitless lakes,
Wide-eyed as the sea-line's blue.

O strong-winged soul with prophetic
Lips hot with the bloodbeats of song,
With tremor of heartstrings magnetic,
With thoughts as thunders in throng,
With consonant ardors of chords
That pierce men's souls as with swords
And hale them hearing along.

Make us, too, music, to be with us
As a word from a world's heart warm,
To sail the dark as a sea with us,
Full-sailed, outsinging the storm,
A song to put fire in our ears
Whose burning shall burn up tears,
Whose sign bid battle reform;

A note in the ranks of a clarion,
A word in the wind of cheer,
To consume as with lightning the carrion
That makes time foul for us here;
In the air that our dead things infest
A blast of the breath of the west,
Till east way as west way is clear.

Out of the sun beyond sunset,
From the evening whence morning shall be,
With the rollers in measureless onset,
With the van of the storming sea,
With the world-wide wind, with the breath
That breaks ships driven upon death,
With the passion of all things free,

With the sea-steeds footless and frantic,
White myriads for death to bestride
In the charge of the ruining Atlantic
Where deaths by regiments ride,
With clouds and clamors of waters,
With a long note shriller than slaughter's
On the furrowless fields world-wide,

With terror, with ardor and wonder,
With the soul of the season that wakes
When the weight of a whole year's thunder
In the tidestream of autumn breaks,
Let the flight of the wide-winged word
Come over, come in and be heard,
Take form and fire for our sakes.

For a continent bloodless with travail
Here toils and brawls as it can,
And the web of it who shall unravel
Of all that peer on the plan;
Would fain grow men, but they grow not,
And fain be free, but they know not
One name for freedom and man?

One name, not twain for division;
One thing, not twain, from the birth;
Spirit and substance and vision,
Worth more than worship is worth;
Unbeheld, unadored, undivined,
The cause, the centre, the mind,
The secret and sense of the earth.

Here as a weakling in irons,
Here as a weanling in bands
As a prey that the stake-net environs,
Our life that we looked for stands;
And the man-child naked and dear,
Democracy, turns on us here
Eyes trembling, with tremulous hands.

It sees not what season shall bring to it
Sweet fruit of its bitter desire;

Few voices it hears yet sing to it,
  Few pulses of hearts reaspire:
Foresees not time, nor forehears
The noises of imminent years,
  Earthquake, and thunder, and fire:

When crowned and weaponed and curbless
  It shall walk without helm or shield
The bare burnt furrows and herbless
  Of war's last flame-stricken field,
Till godlike, equal with time,
It stand in the sun sublime,
  In the godhead of man revealed.

Round your people and over them
  Light like raiment is drawn,
Close as a garment to cover them
  Wrought not of mail nor of lawn:
Here, with hope hardly to wear,
Naked nations and bare
  Swim, sink, strike out for the dawn.

Chains are here, and a prison,
  Kings, and subjects, and shame:
If the God upon you be arisen,
  How should our songs be the same?
How in confusion of change,
How shall we sing, in a strange
  Land songs praising his name?

God is buried and dead to us,
  Even the spirit of earth,
Freedom: so have they said to us,
  Some with mocking and mirth,
Some with heartbreak and tears:
And a God without eyes, without ears,
  Who shall sing of him, dead in the birth?

The earth-god Freedom, the lonely
  Face lightening, the footprint unshod,
Not as one man crucified only
  Nor scourged with but one life's rod:
The soul that is substance of nations,
Reincarnate with fresh generations;
  The great god Man, which is God.

But in weariest of years and obscurest
  Doth it live not at heart of all things
The one God and one spirit, a purest
  Life, fed from unstanchable springs?
Within love, within hatred it is,
And its seed in the stripe as the kiss,
  And in slaves is the germ, and in kings.

Freedom we call it, for holier
  Name of the soul's there is none;
Surelier it labors, if slowlier,
  Than the metres of star or of sun;
Slowlier than life unto breath,
Surelier than time unto death,
  It moves till its labor be done.

Till the motion be done and the measure
  Circling through season and clime,
Slumber and sorrow and pleasure,
  Vision of virtue and crime;
Till consummate with conquering eyes,
A soul disembodied, it rise
  From the body transfigured of time.

Till it rise and remain and take station
  With the stars of the world that rejoice;
Till the voice of its heart's exultation
  Be as theirs an invariable voice,
By no discord of evil estranged,
By no pause, by no breach in it changed,
  By no clash in the chord of its choice.

It is one with the world's generations,
  With the spirit, the star, and the sod:
With the kingless and king-stricken nations,
  With the cross, and the chain, and the rod;
The most high, the most secret, most lonely,
The earth-soul Freedom, that only
  Lives, and that only is God.

From "MATER TRIUMPHALIS"

(1871)

[TO LIBERTY]

I am thine harp between thine hands, O mother!
  All my strong chords are strained with love of thee.
We grapple in love and wrestle, as each with other
  Wrestle the wind and the unreluctant sea.

I am no courtier of thee sober-suited,
  Who loves a little for a little pay.
Me not thy winds and storms, nor thrones disrooted,
  Nor molten crowns, nor thine own sins, dismay.

Sinned hast thou sometime, therefore art thou sinless;

Stained hast thou been, who art therefore without stain;
Even as man's soul is kin to thee, but kinless
Thou, in whose womb Time sows the all-various grain.

I do not bid thee spare me, O dreadful mother!
I pray thee that thou spare not, of thy grace.
How were it with me then, if ever another
Should come to stand before thee in this my place?

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion,
Full of thy cry, sonorous with thy breath;
The graves of souls born worms, and creeds grown carrion
Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.

Thou art the player whose organ-keys are thunders,
And I, beneath thy foot, the pedal pressed;
Thou art the ray whereat the rent night sunders,
And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,
As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line;
But thou from dawn to sunsetting shalt cherish
The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine.

Reared between night and noon and truth and error,
Each twilight-travelling bird that trills and screams
Sickens at midday, nor can face for terror
The imperious heaven's inevitable extremes.

I have no spirit of skill with equal fingers
At sign to sharpen or to slacken strings;
I keep no time of song with gold-perched singers
And chirp of linnets on the wrists of kings.

I am thy storm-thrush of the days that darken,
Thy petrel in the foam that bears thy bark
To port through night and tempest: if thou hearken,
My voice is in thy heaven before the lark.

My song is in the mist that hides thy morning,
My cry is up before the day for thee;
I have heard thee and beheld thee and give warning,
Before thy wheels divide the sky and sea.

Birds shall wake with thee voiced and feathered fairer,
To see in summer what I see in spring;
I have eyes and heart to endure thee,
O thunder-bearer,
And they shall be who shall have tongues to sing.

I have love at least, and have not fear, and part not
From thine unnavigable and wingless way;
Thou tarriest, and I have not said thou art not,
Nor all thy night long have denied thy day.

Darkness to daylight shall lift up thy pæan,
Hill to hill thunder, vale cry back to vale,
With wind-notes as of eagles Æschylean,
And Sappho singing in the nightingale.

Sung to by mighty sons of dawn and daughters,
Of this night's songs thine ear shall keep but one,—
That supreme song which shook the channelled waters,
And called thee skyward as God calls the sun.

Come, though all heaven again be fire above thee;
Though death before thee come to clear thy sky;
Let us but see in his thy face who love thee;
Yea, though thou slay us, arise, and let us die.

MATER DOLOROSA

(1871)

Citoyen, lui dit Enjolras, ma mère, c'est la République.—Les Misérables.

Who is it that sits by the way, by the wild wayside,
In a rent stained raiment, the robe of a cast-off bride,
In the dust, in the rainfall sitting, with soiled feet bare,
With the night for a garment upon her, with torn wet hair?
She is fairer of face than the daughters of men, and her eyes,
Worn through with her tears, are deep as the depth of skies.

This is she for whose sake being fallen, for whose abject sake,
Earth groans in the blackness of darkness, and men's hearts break.
This is she for whose love, having seen her, the men that were
Poured life out as water, and shed their souls upon air.
This is she for whose glory their years were counted as foam;
Whose face was a light upon Greece, was a fire upon Rome.

Is it now not surely a vain thing, a foolish and vain,
To sit down by her, mourn to her, serve her, partake in the pain?
She is gray with the dust of time on his manifold ways,
Where her faint feet stumble and falter through yearlong days.
Shall she help us at all, O fools, give fruit or give fame,
Who herself is a name despised, a rejected name?

We have not served her for guerdon. If any do so,
That his mouth may be sweet with such honey, we care not to know.
We have drunk from a wine-unsweetened, a perilous cup,
A draught very bitter. The kings of the earth stood up,
And the rulers took counsel together, to smite her and slay;
And the blood of her wounds is given us to drink to-day.

Can these bones live? or the leaves that ar
dead leaves bud?
Or the dead blood drawn from her vein
be in your veins blood?
Will ye gather up water again that wa
drawn and shed?
In the blood is the life of the veins, an
her veins are dead.
For the lives that are over are over, an
past things past;
She had her day, and it is not; was firs
and is last.

Is it nothing unto you, then, all ye tha
pass by,
If her breath be left in her lips, if she liv
now or die?
Behold now, O people, and say if she b
not fair,
Whom your fathers followed to find he
with praise and prayer,
And rejoiced, having found her, thoug
roof they had none, nor bread.
But ye care not: what is it to you if he
day be dead?

It was well with our fathers; their soun
was in all men's lands;
There was fire in their hearts, and th
hunger of fight in their hands.
Naked and strong they went forth in he
strength like flame,
For her love's and her name's sake of old
her republican name.
But their children, by kings made quie
by priests made wise,
Love better the heat of their hearths tha
the light of her eyes.

Are they children of these thy childre
indeed, who have sold,
O golden goddess, the light of thy fac
for gold?
Are they sons indeed of the sons of th
dayspring of hope,
Whose lives are in fief of an emperor
whose souls of a Pope?
Hide then thine head, O belovèd! thy tim
is done;
Thy kingdom is broken in heaven, an
blind thy sun.

What sleep is upon you, to dream sh
indeed shall rise,
When the hopes are dead in her heart a
the tears in her eyes?
If ye sing of her dead, will she stir? i
ye weep for her, weep?

Come away now, leave her: what hath she
to do but sleep?
But ye that mourn are alive, and have
years to be;
And life is good, and the world is wiser
than we.

Yea, wise is the world and mighty, with
years to give,
And years to promise; but how long now
shall it live?
And foolish and poor is faith, and her
ways are bare,
Till she find the way of the sun, and the
morning air.
In that hour shall this dead face shine as
the face of the sun,
And the soul of man and her soul and the
world's be one.

COR CORDIUM

(1871)

O heart of hearts, the chalice of love's fire,
Hid round with flowers and all the
bounty of bloom;
O wonderful and perfect heart, for
whom
The lyrist liberty made life a lyre;
O heavenly heart, at whose most dear
desire
Dead love, living and singing, cleft his
tomb,
And with him risen and regent in death's
room
All day thy choral pulses rang full choir;

O heart whose beating blood was running
song,
O sole thing sweeter than thine own
songs were,
Help us for thy free love's sake to be
free,
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's
sake strong,
Till very liberty make clean and fair
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.

THE SONG OF THE STANDARD

(1871)

Maiden most beautiful, mother most boun-
tiful, lady of lands,
Queen and republican, crowned of the
centuries whose years are thy sands,
See for thy sake what we bring to thee,
Italy, here in our hands.

This is the banner thy gonfalon, fair in
front of thy fight,
Red from the hearts that were pierced for
thee, white as thy mountains are
white,
Green as the spring of thy soul everlasting,
whose life-blood is light.

Take to thy bosom thy banner, a fair bird
fit for the nest,
Feathered for flight into sunrise or sunset,
for eastward or west,
Fledged for the flight everlasting, but held
yet warm to thy breast.

Gather it close to thee, song-bird or storm-
bearer, eagle or dove,
Lift it to sunward, a beacon beneath to
the beacon above,
Green as our hope in it, white as our
faith in it, red as our love.

Thunder and splendor of lightning are
hid in the folds of it furled;
Who shall unroll it but thou, as thy bolt
to be handled and hurled,
Out of whose lips is the honey, whose
bosom the milk of the world?

Out of thine hands hast thou fed us with
pasture of color and song;
Glory and beauty by birthright to thee as
thy garments belong;
Out of thine hands thou shalt give us as
surely deliverance from wrong.

Out of thine eyes thou hast shed on us
love as a lamp in our night,
Wisdom a lodestar to ships, and remem-
brance a flame-colored light;
Out of thine eyes thou shalt show us as
surely the sun-dawn of right.

Turn to us, speak to us, Italy, mother, but
once and a word,
None shall not follow thee, none shall not
serve thee, not one that has heard;
Twice hast thou spoken a message, and
time is athirst for the third.

Kingdom and empire of peoples thou hadst,
and thy lordship made one
North sea and south sea and east men
and west men that look on the sun;
Spirit was in thee and counsel, when soul
in the nations was none.

Banner and beacon thou wast to the centuries of storm-wind and foam,
Ages that clashed in the dark with each other, and years without home;
Empress and prophetess wast thou, and what wilt thou now be, O Rome?

Ah, by the faith and the hope and the love that have need of thee now,
Shines not thy face with the forethought of freedom, and burns not thy brow?
Who is against her but all men? and who is beside her but thou?

Art thou not better than all men? and where shall she turn but to thee?
Lo, not a breath, not a beam, not a beacon from midland to sea;
Freedom cries out for a sign among nations, and none will be free.

England in doubt of her, France in despair of her, all without heart—
Stand on her side in the vanward of ages, and strike on her part!
Strike but one stroke for the love of her love of thee, sweet that thou art!

Take in thy right hand thy banner, a strong staff fit for thine hand;
Forth at the light of it lifted shall foul things flock from the land;
Faster than stars from the sun shall they fly, being lighter than sand.

Green thing to green in the summer makes answer, and rose-tree to rose;
Lily by lily the year becomes perfect; and none of us knows
What thing is fairest of all things on earth as it brightens and blows.

This thing is fairest in all time of all things, in all time is best—
Freedom, that made thee, our mother, and suckled her sons at thy breast;
Take to thy bosom the nations, and there shall the world come to rest.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN

(1878)

In a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its roses
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?
So long have the grey bare walks lain guestless,
Through branches and briers if a man make way,
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled,
That crawls by a track none turn to climb
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled
Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.
The thorns he spares when the rose is taken;
The rocks are left when he wastes the plain.
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-shaken,
These remain.

Not a flower to be pressed of the foot that falls not;
As the heart of a dead man the seed-plots are dry;
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.
Over the meadows that blossom and wither
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song;
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.
Only the wind here hovers and revels
In a round where life seems barren as death.
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood, "Look thither,"
Did he whisper? "look forth from the flowers to the sea;
For the foam-flowers endure when rose-blossoms wither,
And men that love lightly may die—but we?"
And the same wind sang and the same waves whitened,
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?
And were one to the end—but what end who knows?
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
What love was ever as deep as a grave?
They are loveless now as the grass above them
Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,
Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers
In the air now soft with a summer to be.
Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,
When as they that are free now of weeping and laughter,
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again for ever:
Here change may come not till all change end.
From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,
Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.
Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,
While the sun and the rain live, these shall be:
Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing
Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead.

A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND

(1878)

I hid my heart in a nest of roses,
Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;
In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,
Under the roses I hid my heart.
Why would it sleep not? why should it start,
When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?
What made sleep flutter his wings and part?
Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,
And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;
Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,
And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.
Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?
Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?

What bids the lids of thy sleep dis-
part?
Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm en-
closes,
It never was writ in the traveller's chart,
And sweet on its trees as the fruit that
grows is,
It never was sold in the merchant's
mart.
The swallows of dreams through its dim
fields dart,
And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops
heard;
No hound's note wakens the wildwood
hart,
Only the song of a secret bird.

ENVOI

In the world of dreams I have chosen my
part,
To sleep for a season and hear no word
Of true love's truth or of light love's art,
Only the song of a secret bird.

AVE ATQUE VALE

(1878)

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques
fleurs;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes
douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux
arbres,
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs
marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien
ingrats.

Les Fleurs du Mal

Shall I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
Brother, on this that was the veil of
thee?
Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or
sorrel,
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads
weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at
eve?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more
sweet
To thee than gleanings of a northern
shore
Trod by no tropic feet?

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier
skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering
watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promon-
tories,
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian
grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of
song.
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green
gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her
wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season,
brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poison-
ous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in
clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without
speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumul-
tuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits
weep;
And with each face thou sawest the shad-
ow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleep-
ing,
That were athirst for sleep and no more
life
And no more love, for peace and no
more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their
keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of
song,
Is it well now where love can do no
wrong,

Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
As dew from flower-bell drips?

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labor and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savor and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits grey like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold

As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seed-lands bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could quicken
There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfil all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunsetting,
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.
Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,
And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill:
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine,
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey, compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
And shadows hot from hell.

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things; none to mend
And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.

Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants grey,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed?

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobean womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

THE LAST ORACLE

A. D. 361

(1878)

εἴπατε τῷ βασιλῆϊ· χαμαὶ πέσε δαίδαλος αὐλά.
Οὐκέτι Φοῖβος ἔχει καλύβαν, οὐ μάντιδα δάφνην,
οὐ παγὰν λαλέουσαν· απέσβετο καὶ λάλον ὕδωρ.

Years have risen and fallen in darkness or in twilight,
Ages waxed and waned that knew not thee nor thine,
While the world sought light by night and sought not thy light,
Since the sad last pilgrim left thy dark mid-shrine.
Dark the shrine, and dumb the fount of song thence welling,
Save for words more sad than tears of blood, that said:
Tell the king, on earth has fallen the glorious dwelling,
And the water-springs that spake are quenched and dead.
Not a cell is left the god, no roof, no cover;
In his hand the prophet laurel flowers no more.
And the great king's high sad heart, thy true last lover,
Felt thine answer pierce and cleave it to the core.
And he bowed down his hopeless head
In the drift of the wild world's tide,
And dying, *Thou hast conquered,* he said,
Galilæan: he said it and died.
And the world that was thine and was ours
When the Graces took hands with the Hours
Grew cold as a winter wave
In the wind from a wide-mouthed grave,
As a gulf wide open to swallow
The light that the world held dear.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Age on age thy mouth was mute, thy face was hidden,
And the lips and eyes that loved thee blind and dumb;
Song forsook their tongues that held thy name forbidden,
Light their eyes that saw the strange god's kingdom come.
Fire for light and hell for heaven and psalms for pæans
Filled the clearest eyes and lips most sweet of song,
When for chant of Greeks the wail of Galilæans
Made the whole world moan with hymns of wrath and wrong.
Yea, not yet we see thee, father, as they saw thee,

They that worshipped when the world was theirs and thine,
They whose words had power by thine own power to draw thee
Down from heaven till earth seemed more than heaven divine.
For the shades are about us that hover
When darkness is half withdrawn,
And the skirts of the dead night cover
The face of the live new dawn.
For the past is not utterly past,
Though the word on its lips be the last,
And the time be gone by with its creed
When men were as beasts that bleed,
As sheep or as swine that wallow,
In the shambles of faith and of fear.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Yet it may be, lord and father, could we know it,
We that love thee for our darkness shall have light
More than ever prophet hailed of old, or poet
Standing crowned and robed and sovereign in thy sight.
To the likeness of one God their dreams enthralled thee,
Who was greater than all gods that waned and grew;
Son of God the shining son of Time they called thee,
Who was older, O our father, than they knew.
For no thought of man made gods to love or honor
Ere the song within the silent soul began;
Nor might earth in dream or deed take heaven upon her
Till the word was clothed with speech by lips of man.
And the word and the life was thou,
The spirit of man and the breath;
And before thee the gods that bow
Take life at thine hands and death.
For these are as ghosts that wane,
That are gone in an age or twain;
Harsh, merciful, passionate, pure,
They perish, but thou shalt endure;
Be their life as the swan's or the swallow,
They pass as the flight of a year.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Thou the word, the light, the life, the breath, the glory,
Strong to help and heal, to lighten and to slay,
Thine is all the song of man, the world's whole story;
Not of morning and of evening is thy day.
Old and younger gods are buried or begotten
From uprising to downsetting of thy sun,
Risen from eastward, fallen to westward and forgotten,
And their springs are many, but their end is one.
Divers births of godheads find one death appointed,
As the soul whence each was born makes room for each;
God by god goes out, discrowned and disanointed,
But the soul stands fast that gave them shape and speech.
Is the sun yet cast out of heaven?
Is the song yet cast out of man?
Life that had song for its leaven
To quicken the blood that ran
Through the veins of the songless years
More bitter and cold than tears;
Heaven that had thee for its one
Light, life, word, witness, O sun,—
Are they soundless and sightless and hollow,
Without eye, without speech, without ear?
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Time arose, and smote thee silent at his warning;
Change and darkness fell on men that fell from thee;
Dark thou satest, veiled with light, behind the morning,
Till the soul of man should lift up eyes and see.
Till the blind mute soul get speech again and eye-sight
Man may worship not the light of life within;
In his sight the stars whose fires grow dark in thy sight
Shine as sunbeams on the night of death and sin.
Time again is risen with mightier word of warning,
Change hath blown again a blast of louder breath;

Clothed with clouds and stars and dreams that melt in morning,
Lo, the gods that ruled by grace of sin and death!
They are conquered, they break, they are stricken,
Whose might made the whole world pale;
They are dust that shall rise not or quicken
Though the world for their death's sake wail.
As a hound on a wild beast's trace,
So time has their godhead in chase;
As wolves when the hunt makes head,
They are scattered, they fly, they are fled;
They are fled beyond hail, beyond hollo,
And the cry of the chase, and the cheer.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Day by day thy shadow shines in heaven beholden,
Even the sun, the shining shadow of thy face:
King, the ways of heaven before thy feet grow golden;
God, the soul of earth is kindled with thy grace.
In thy lips the speech of man whence gods were fashioned,
In thy soul the thought that makes them and unmakes;
By thy light and heat incarnate and impassioned,
Soul to soul of man gives light for light, and takes.
As they knew thy name of old time could we know it,
Healer called of sickness, slayer invoked of wrong,
Light of eyes that saw thy light, god, king, priest, poet,
Song should bring thee back to heal us with thy song.
For thy kingdom is past not away,
Nor thy power from the place thereof hurled:
Out of heaven they shall cast not the day,
They shall cast not out song from the world.
By the song and the light they give,
We know thy works that they live;
With the gift thou hast given us of speech
We praise, we adore, we beseech,
We arise at thy bidding, and follow,
We cry to thee, answer, appear,
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

A BALLAD OF FRANÇOIS VILLON

PRINCE OF ALL BALLAD-MAKERS

(1878)

Bird of the bitter bright gray golden morn,
Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,
First of us all and sweetest singer born,
Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears
Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight clears;
When song new-born put off the old world's attire
And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,
Writ foremost on the roll of them that came
Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Alas, the joy, the sorrow, and the scorn,
That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,
And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn
And plume-plucked gaol-birds for thy starveling peers,
Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears;
Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,
When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire
Could buy thee bread or kisses; when light fame
Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!
Poor kind wild eyes, so dashed with light quick tears!
Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,

That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers,
Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears!
What far delight has cooled the fierce desire
That, like some ravenous bird, was strong to tire
On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,
But left more sweet than roses to respire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name?

ENVOI

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire;
Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame.
But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,
Love reads out first at head of all our quire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.

TRIADS

(1878)

I

The word of the sun to the sky,
The word of the wind to the sea,
The word of the moon to the night,
What may it be?

The sense of the flower to the fly,
The sense of the bird to the tree,
The sense of the cloud to the light,
Who can tell me?

The song of the fields to the kye,
The song of the lime to the bee,
The song of the depth to the height,
Who knows all three?

II

The message of April to May,
That May sends on into June
And June gives out to July
For birthday boon;

The delight of the dawn in the day,
The delight of the day in the noon,
The delight of a song in a sigh
That breaks the tune;

The secret of passing away,
The cast of the change of the moon,
None knows it with ear or with eye,
But all will soon.

III

The live wave's love for the shore,
The shore's for the wave as it dies,
The love of the thunder-fire
That sears the skies—

We shall know not though life wax hoar,
Till all life, spent into sighs,
Burn out as consumed with desire
Of death's strange eyes;

Till the secret be secret no more
In the light of one hour as it flies,
Be the hour as of suns that expire
Or suns that rise.

ON THE DEATHS OF THOMAS CARLYE AND GEORGE ELIOT

(1881)

Two souls diverse out of our human sight
Pass, followed one with love and each with wonder:
The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,
Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might
Of darkness and magnificence of night;
And one whose eye could smite the night in sunder,
Searching if light or no light were thereunder,
And found in love of loving-kindness light.
Duty divine and Thought with eyes of fire
Still following Righteousness with deep desire
Shone sole and stern before her and above—
Sure stars and sole to steer by; but more sweet
Shone lower the loveliest lamp for earthly feet,—
The light of little children, and their love.

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER

(1882)

All the bells of heaven may ring,
All the birds of heaven may sing,
All the wells on earth may spring,
All the winds on earth may bring
  All sweet sounds together;
Sweeter far than all things heard,
Hand of harper, tone of bird,
Sound of woods at sundawn stirr'd,
Welling water's winsome word,
  Wind in warm wan weather,

One thing yet there is, that none
Hearing ere its chime be done
Knows not well the sweetest one
Heard of man beneath the sun,
  Hoped in heaven hereafter;
Soft and strong and loud and light,
Very sound of very light
Heard from morning's rosiest height,
When the soul of all delight
  Fills a child's clear laughter.

Golden bells of welcome roll'd
Never forth such notes, nor told
Hours so blithe in tones so bold,
As the radiant mouth of gold
  Here that rings forth heaven.
If the golden-crested wren
Were a nightingale—why, then
Something seen and heard of men
Might be half as sweet as when
  Laughs a child of seven.

IN GUERNSEY

TO THEODORE WATTS

(1883)

The heavenly bay, ringed round with cliffs and moors,
Storm-stained ravines, and crags that lawns inlay,
Soothes as with love the rocks whose guard secures
  The heavenly bay.

O friend, shall time take even this away,
This blessing given of beauty that endures,
This glory shown us, not to pass but stay?
Though sight be changed for memory, love ensures
What memory, changed by love to sight, would say—
The word that seals for ever mine and yours,
  The heavenly bay.

II

My mother sea, my fostress, what new strand,
What new delight of waters, may this be,
The fairest found since time's first breezes fanned
  My mother sea?

Once more I give me body and soul to thee,
Who hast my soul for ever: cliff and sand
Recede, and heart to heart once more are we.

My heart springs first and plunges, ere my hand
Strike out from shore: more close it brings to me,
More near and dear than seems my fatherland,
  My mother sea.

III

Across and along, as the bay's breadth opens, and o'er us
Wild autumn exults in the wind, swift rapture and strong
Impels us, and broader the wide waves brighten before us
  Across and along.

The whole world's heart is uplifted, and knows not wrong;
The whole world's life is a chant to the sea-tide's chorus;
Are we not as waves of the water, as notes of the song?

Like children unworn of the passions and toils that wore us,
We breast for a season the breadth of the seas that throng,
Rejoicing as they, to be borne as of old they bore us
  Across and along.

A SINGING LESSON

(1883)

Far-fetched and dear bought, as the proverb rehearses,
Is good, or was held so, for ladies; but nought
In a song can be good if the turn of the verse is
Far-fetched and dear bought.

As the turn of a wave should it sound, and the thought
Ring smooth, and as light as the spray that disperses
Be the gleam of the words for the garb thereof wrought.

Let the soul in it shine through the sound as it pierces
Men's hearts with possession of music unsought;
For the bounties of song are no jealous god's mercies,
Far-fetched and dear bought.

THE ROUNDEL

(1883)

A Roundel is wrought as a ring or a starbright sphere,
With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,
That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure his ear
A roundel is wrought.

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught—
Love, laughter, or mourning—remembrance of rapture or fear—
That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in us hear—
Pause answers to pause, and again the same strain caught,
So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,
A roundel is wrought.

ON A COUNTRY ROAD

(1884)

Along these low pleached lanes, on such a day,
So soft a day as this, through shade and sun,
With glad grave eyes that scanned the glad wild way
And heart still hovering o'er a song begun,
And smile that warmed the world with benison,
Our father, lord long since of lordly rhyme,
Long since hath haply ridden, when the lime
Bloomed broad above him, flowering where he came.
Because thy passage once made warm this clime,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each year that England clothes herself with May,
She takes thy likeness on her. Time hath spun
Fresh raiment all in vain and strange array
For earth and man's new spirit, fain to shun
Things past for dreams of better to be won,
Through many a century since thy funeral chime
Rang, and men deemed it death's most direful crime
To have spared not thee for very love or shame;
And yet, while mists round last year's memories climb,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each turn of the old wild road whereon we stray,
Meseems, might bring us face to face with one
Whom seeing we could not but give thanks, and pray
For England's love our father and her son
To speak with us as once in days long done

With all men, sage and churl and monk and mime,
Who knew not as we know the soul sublime
That sang for song's love more than lust of fame.
Yet, though this be not, yet, in happy time,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Friend, even as bees about the flowering thyme,
Years crowd on years, till hoar decay begrime
Names once beloved; but seeing the sun the same,
As birds of autumn fain to praise the prime,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

ON THE VERGE

(1884)

Here begins the sea that ends not till the world's end. Where we stand,
Could we know the next high sea-mark set beyond these waves that gleam,
We should know what never man hath known, nor eye of man hath scanned.
Nought beyond these coiling clouds that melt like fume of shrines that steam
Breaks or stays the strength of waters till they pass our bounds of dream.
Where the waste Land's End leans westward, all the seas it watches roll
Find their border fixed beyond them, and a worldwide shore's control:
These whereby we stand, no shore beyond us limits: these are free.
Gazing hence, we see the water that grows iron round the Pole,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Sail on sail along the sea-line fades and flashes: here on land
Flash and fade the wheeling wings on wings of mews that plunge and scream.
Hour on hour along the line of life and time's evasive strand
Shines and darkens, wanes and waxes, slays and dies: and scarce they seem
More than motes that thronged and trembled in the brief noon's breath and beam.
Some with crying and wailing, some with notes like sound of bells that toll,
Some with sighing and laughing, some with words that blessed and made us whole,
Passed, and left us, and we know not what they were, nor what were we.
Would we know, being mortal? Never breath of answering whisper stole
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Shadows, would we question darkness? Ere our eyes and brows be fanned
Round with airs of twilight, washed with dews from sleep's eternal stream,
Would we know sleep's guarded secret? Ere the fire consume the brand,
Would it know if yet its ashes may requicken? yet we deem
Surely man may know, or ever night unyoke her starry team,
What the dawn shall be, or if the dawn shall be not: yea, the scroll
Would we read of sleep's dark scripture, pledge of peace or doom of dole.
Ah, but here man's heart leaps, yearning toward the gloom with venturous glee,
Though his pilot eye behold nor bay nor harbor, rock nor shoal,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Friend, who knows if death indeed have life or life have death for goal?
Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare nor skies unroll
What has been from everlasting, or if aught shall alway be.
Silence answering only strikes response reverberate on the soul
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

ON THE MONUMENT ERECTED TO MAZZINI AT GENOA

(1884)

Italia, mother of the souls of men,
Mother divine
Of all that serv'd thee best with sword or pen,
All sons of thine,

Thou knowest that here the likeness of the best
Before thee stands:
The head most high, the heart found faithfulest,
The purest hands.

Above the fume and foam of time that flits,
The soul, we know,
Now sits on high where Alighieri sits
With Angelo.

Nor his own heavenly tongue hath heavenly speech
Enough to say
What this man was, whose praise no thought may reach,
No words can weigh.

Since man's first mother brought to mortal birth
Her first-born son,
Such grace befell not ever man on earth
As crowns this One.

Of God nor man was ever this thing said:
That he could give
Life back to her who gave him, that his dead
Mother might live.

But this man found his mother dead and slain,
With fast-seal'd eyes,
And bade the dead rise up and live again,
And she did rise:

And all the world was bright with her through him:
But dark with strife,
Like heaven's own sun that storming clouds bedim,
Was all his life.

Life and the clouds are vanish'd; hate and fear
Have had their span
Of time to hurt and are not: He is here,
The sunlike man.

City superb, that hadst Columbus first
For sovereign son,
Be prouder that thy breast hath later nursed
This mightier One.

Glory be his for ever, while his land
Lives and is free,
As with controlling breath and sovereign hand
He bade her be.

Earth shows to heaven the names by thousands told
That crown her fame,
But highest of all that heaven and earth behold,
Mazzini's name.

IN A ROSARY

(1904)

Through the low grey archway children's feet that pass
Quicken, glad to find the sweetest haunt of all.
Brightest wildflowers gleaming deep in lustiest grass,
Glorious weeds that glisten through the green sea's glass,
Match not now this marvel, born to fade and fall.

Roses like a rainbow wrought of roses rise
Right and left and forward, shining toward the sun.
Nay, the rainbow lit of sunshine droops and dies
Ere we dream it hallows earth and seas and skies;
Ere delight may dream it lives, its life is done.

Round the border hemmed with high deep hedges round
Go the children, peering over or between
Where the dense bright oval wall of box inwound,
Reared about the roses fast within it bound,
Gives them grace to glance at glories else unseen.

Flower outlightening flower and tree outflowering tree
Feed and fill the sense and spirit full with joy.
Nought awhile they know of outer earth and sea:
Here enough of joy it is to breathe and be:
Here the sense of life is one for girl and boy.

Heaven above them, bright as children's eyes or dreams,
Earth about them, sweet as glad soft sleep can show
Earth and sky and sea, a world that scarcely seems
Even in children's eyes less fair than life that gleams
Through the sleep that none but sinless eyes may know.

Near beneath, and near above, the terraced ways
Wind or stretch and bask or blink against the sun.
Hidden here from sight on soft or stormy days
Lies and laughs with love toward heaven, at silent gaze,
All the radiant rosary—all its flowers made one.

All the multitude of roses towering round
Dawn and noon and night behold as one full flower,
Fain of heaven and loved of heaven, curbed and crowned,
Raised and reared to make this plot of earthly ground
Heavenly, could but heaven endure on earth an hour.

Swept away, made nothing now for ever, dead,
Still the rosary lives and shines on memory, free
Now from fear of death or change of childhood, fled
Years on years before its last live leaves were shed:
None may mar it now, as none may stain the sea.

A CHANNEL PASSAGE

(Voyage made 1855–Poem published 1904)

Forth from Calais, at dawn of night, when sunset summer on autumn shone,
Fared the steamer alert and loud through seas whence only the sun was gone:
Soft and sweet as the sky they smiled, and bade man welcome: a dim sweet hour
Gleamed and whispered in wind and sea, and heaven was fair as a field in flower,
Stars fulfilled the desire of the darkling world as with music: the starbright air
Made the face of the sea, if aught may make the face of the sea, more fair.

Whence came change? Was the sweet night weary of rest? What anguish awoke in the dark?
Sudden, sublime, the strong storm spake: we heard the thunders as hounds that bark.
Lovelier if aught may be lovelier than stars, we saw the lightnings exalt the sky,
Living and lustrous and rapturous as love that is born but to quicken and lighten and die.
Heaven's own heart at its highest of delight found utterance in music and semblance in fire:
Thunder on thunder exulted, rejoicing to live and to satiate the night's desire.
And the night was alive and anhungered of life as a tiger from toils cast free:
And a rapture of rage made joyous the spirit and strength of the soul of the sea.
All the weight of the wind bore down on it, freighted with death for fraught:
And the keen waves kindled and quickened as things transfigured or things distraught.
And madness fell on them laughing and leaping; and madness came on the wind:
And the might and the light and the darkness of storm were as storm in the heart of Ind.
Such glory, such terror, such passion, as lighten and harrow the far fierce East,
Rang, shone, spake, shuddered around us: the night was an altar with death for priest.
The channel that sunders England from shores where never was man born free
Was clothed with the likeness and thrilled with the strength and the wrath of a tropic sea.
As a wild steed ramps in rebellion, and rears till it swerves from a backward fall,
The strong ship struggled and reared, and her deck was upright as a sheer cliff's wall.

Stern and prow plunged under, alternate:
a glimpse, a recoil, a breath,
And she sprang as the life in a god made
man would spring at the throat of
death.
Three glad hours, and it seemed not an
hour of supreme and supernal joy,
Filled full with delight that revives in re-
membrance a sea-bird's heart in a boy.
For the central crest of the night was cloud
that thundered and flamed, sublime
As the splendor and song of the soul ever-
lasting that quickens the pulse of
time,
The glory beholden of man in a vision, the
music of light overhead,
The rapture and radiance of battle, the life
that abides in the fire of a word,
In the midmost heaven enkindled, was
manifest far on the face of the sea,
And the rage in the roar of the voice of
the waters was heard but when heaven
breathed free.
Far eastward, clear of the covering of
cloud, the sky laughed out into light
From the rims of the storm to the sea's
dark edge with flames that were
flowerlike and white.
The leaping and luminous blossoms of live
sheet lightning that laugh as they
fade
From the cloud's black base to the black
wave's brim rejoiced in the light they
made.
Far westward, throned in a silent sky,
where life was in lustrous tune,
Shone, sweeter and surer than morning or
evening, the steadfast smile of the
moon.
The limitless heaven that enshrined them
was lovelier than dreams may behold,
and deep
As life or as death, revealed and trans-
figured, may shine on the soul through
sleep.
All glories of toil and of triumph and
passion and pride that it yearns to
know
Bore witness there to the soul of its like-
ness and kinship, above and below.
The joys of the lightnings, the songs of
the thunders, the strong sea's labor
and rage,
Were tokens and signs of the war that
is life and is joy for the soul to wage.
No thought strikes deeper or higher than
the heights and the depths that the
night made bare,
Illimitable, infinite, awful and joyful, alive
in the summit of air—
Air stilled and thrilled by the tempest that
thundered between its reign and the
sea's,
Rebellious, rapturous, and transient as faith
or as terror that bows men's knees.
No love sees loftier and fairer the form of
its godlike vision in dreams
Than the world shone then, when the sky
and the sea were as love for a breath's
length seems—
One utterly, mingled and mastering and
mastered and laughing with love that
subsides
As the glad mad night sank panting and
satiate with storm, and released the
tides.
In the dense mid channel the steam-souled
ship hung hovering, assailed and with-
held
As a soul born royal, if life or death be
against it, is thwarted and quelled.
As the glories of myriads of glowworms
in lustrous grass on a boundless lawn
Were the glories of flames phosphoric that
made of the water a light like dawn.
A thousand Phosphors, a thousand Hes-
pers, awoke in the churning sea,
And the swift soft hiss of them living and
dying was clear as a tune could be;
As a tune that is played by the fingers
of death on the keys of life or of
sleep,
Audible alway alive in the storm, too fleet
for a dream to keep:
Too fleet, too sweet for a dream to recover
and thought to remember awake:
Light subtler and swifter than lightning,
that whispers and laughs in the live
storm's wake,
In the wild bright wake of the storm, in
the dense loud heart of the laboring
hour,
A harvest of stars by the storm's hand
reaped, each fair as a star-shaped
flower.
And, sudden and soft as the passing of
sleep is, the passing of tempest seemed
When the light and the sound of it sank,
and the glory was gone as a dream
half dreamed.
The glory, the terror, the passion that made
of the midnight a miracle, died,
Not slain at a stroke, nor in gradual re-
luctance abated of power and of
pride;
With strong swift subsidence, awful as

power that is wearied of power upon earth,
As a God that were wearied of power upon heaven, and were fain of a new God's birth,
The might of the night subsided: the tyranny kindled in darkness fell:
And the sea and the sky put off them the rapture and radiance of heaven and of hell.
The waters, heaving and hungering at heart, made way, and were wellnigh fain,
For the ship that had fought them, and wrestled, and revelled in labor, to cease from her pain.
And an end was made of it: only remembrance endures of the glad loud strife;
And the sense that a rapture so royal may come not again in the passage of life.

THE LAKE OF GAUBE

(1904)

The sun is lord and god, sublime, serene,
And sovereign on the mountains: earth and air
Lie prone in passion, blind with bliss unseen
By force of sight and might of rapture, fair
As dreams that die and know not what they were.
The lawns, the gorges, and the peaks, are one
Glad glory, thrilled with sense of unison
In strong compulsive silence of the sun.

Flowers dense and keen as midnight stars aflame
And living things of light like flames in flower
That glance and flash as though no hand might tame
Lightnings whose life outshone their stormlit hour
And played and laughed on earth, with all their power
Gone, and with all their joy of life made long
And harmless as the lightning life of song,
Shine sweet like stars when darkness feels them strong.

The deep mild purple flaked with moon-bright gold
That makes the scales seem flowers of hardened light,
The flamelike tongue, the feet that noon leaves cold,
The kindly trust in man, when once the sight
Grew less than strange, and faith bade fear take flight,
Outlive the little harmless life that shone
And gladdened eyes that loved it, and was gone
Ere love might fear that fear had looked thereon.

Fear held the bright thing hateful, even as fear,
Whose name is one with hate and horror, saith
That heaven, the dark deep heaven of water near,
Is deadly deep as hell and dark as death.
The rapturous plunge that quickens blood and breath
With pause more sweet than passion, ere they strive
To raise again the limbs that yet would dive
Deeper, should there have slain the soul alive.

As the bright salamander in fire of the noonshine exults and is glad of his day,
The spirit that quickens my body rejoices to pass from the sunlight away,
To pass from the glow of the mountainous flowerage, the high multitudinous bloom,
Far down through the fathomless night of the water, the gladness of silence and gloom.
Death-dark and delicious as death in the dream of a lover and dreamer may be,
It clasps and encompasses body and soul with delight to be living and free:
Free utterly now, though the freedom endure but the space of a perilous breath,
And living, though girdled about with the darkness and coldness and strangeness of death:
Each limb and each pulse of the body rejoicing, each nerve of the spirit at rest,
All sense of the soul's life rapture, a passionate peace in its blindness blest.
So plunges the downward swimmer, em-

braced of the water unfathomed of man,
The darkness unplummeted, icier than seas in midwinter, for blessing or ban;
And swiftly and sweetly, when strength and breath fall short, and the dive is done,
Shoots up as a shaft from the dark depth shot, sped straight into sight of the sun;
And sheer through the snow-soft water, more dark than the roof of the pines above,
Strikes forth, and is glad as a bird whose flight is impelled and sustained of love.
As a sea-mew's love of the sea-wind breasted and ridden for rapture's sake
Is the love of his body and soul for the darkling delight of the soundless lake:
As the silent speed of a dream too living to live for a thought's space more
Is the flight of his limbs through the still strong chill of the darkness from shore to shore.
Might life be as this is and death be as life that casts off time as a robe,
The likeness of infinite heaven were a symbol revealed of the lake of Gaube.

Whose thought has fathomed and measured
The darkness of life and of death,
The secret within them treasured,
The spirit that is not breath?
Whose vision has yet beholden
The splendor of death and of life?
Though sunset as dawn be golden,
Is the word of them peace, not strife?
Deep silence answers: the glory
We dream of may be but a dream,
And the sun of the soul wax hoary
As ashes that show not a gleam,
But well shall it be with us ever
Who drive through the darkness here,
If the soul that we live by never,
For aught that a lie saith, fear.

NORTHUMBERLAND

(1904)

Between our eastward and our westward sea
The narrowing strand
Clasps close the noblest shore fame holds in fee
Even here where English birth seals all men free—
Northumberland.

The sea-mists meet across it when the snow
Clothes moor and fell,
And bid their true-born hearts who love it glow
For joy that none less nobly born may know
What love knows well.

The splendor and the strength of storm and fight
Sustain the song
That filled our fathers' hearts with joy to smite,
To live, to love, to lay down life that right
Might tread down wrong.

They warred, they sang, they triumphed, and they passed,
And left us glad
Here to be born, their sons, whose hearts hold fast
The proud old love no change can overcast,
No chance leave sad.

None save our northmen ever, none but we,
Met, pledged, or fought
Such foes and friends as Scotland and the sea
With heart so high and equal, strong in glee
And stern in thought.

Thought, fed from time's memorial springs with pride,
Made strong as fire
Their hearts who hurled the foe down Flodden side,
And hers who rode the waves none else durst ride—
None save her sire.

O land beloved, where nought of legend's dream
Outshines the truth,
Where Joyous Gard,[1] closed round with clouds that gleam

1 Some Arthurian legends placed Lancelot's castle of Joyous Gard in Northumberland, others in France.

For them that know thee not, can scarce but seem
Too sweet for sooth,
Thy sons forget not, nor shall fame forget,
The deed there done
Before the walls whose fabled fame is yet
A light too sweet and strong to rise and set
With moon and sun.

Song bright as flash of swords or oars that shine
Through fight or foam
Stirs yet the blood thou hast given thy sons like wine
To hail in each bright ballad hailed as thine
One heart, one home.

Our Collingwood, though Nelson be not ours,
By him shall stand
Immortal, till those waifs of oldworld hours,
Forgotten, leave uncrowned with bays and flowers
Northumberland.

BURNS: AN ODE

(1904)

A Fire of fierce and laughing light
That clove the shuddering heart of night
Leapt earthward, and the thunder's might
That pants and yearns
Made fitful music round its flight:
And earth saw Burns.

The joyous lightning found its voice
And bade the heart of wrath rejoice
And scorn uplift a song to voice
The imperial hate
That smote the God of base men's choice
At God's own gate.

Before the shrine of dawn, wherethrough
The lark rang rapture as she flew,
It flashed and fired the darkling dew:
And all that heard
With love or loathing hailed anew
A new day's word.

The servants of the lord of hell,
As though their lord had blessed them, fell
Foaming at mouth for fear, so well
They knew the lie
Wherewith they sought to scan and spell
The unsounded sky.

And Calvin, night's prophetic bird,
Out of his home in hell was heard
Shrieking; and all the fens were stirred
Whence plague is bred;
Can God endure the scoffer's word?
But God was dead.

The God they made them in despite
Of man and woman, love and light,
Strong sundawn and the starry night,
The lie supreme,
Shot through with song, stood forth to sight
A devil's dream.

And he that bent the lyric bow
And laid the lord of darkness low
And bade the fire of laughter glow
Across his grave,
And bade the tides above it flow,
Wave hurtling wave,

Shall he not win from latter days
More than his own could yield of praise?
Ay, could the sovereign singer's bays
Forsake his brow,
The warrior's, won on stormier ways,
Still clasp it now.

He loved, and sang of love: he laughed,
And bade the cup whereout he quaffed
Shine as a planet, fore and aft,
And left and right,
And keen as shoots the sun's first shaft
Against the night.

But love and wine were moon and sun
For many a fame long since undone,
And sorrow and joy have lost and won
By stormy turns
As many a singer's soul, if none
More bright than Burns.

And sweeter far in grief or mirth
Have songs as glad and sad of birth
Found voice to speak of wealth or dearth
In joy of life:
But never song took fire from earth
More strong for strife.

The daisy by his ploughshare cleft,
The lips of women loved and left,

The griefs and joys that weave the weft
Of human time,
With craftsman's cunning, keen and deft,
He carved in rhyme.

But Chaucer's daisy shines a star
Above his ploughshare's reach to mar,
And mightier vision gave Dunbar
More strenuous wing
To hear around all sins that are
Hell dance and sing.

And when such pride and power of trust
In song's high gift to arouse from dust
Death, and transfigure love or lust
Through smiles or tears
In golden speech that takes no rust
From cankering years,

As never spake but once in one
Strong star-crossed child of earth and sun,
Villon, made music such as none
May praise or blame,
A crown of starrier flower was won
Than Burns may claim.

But never, since bright earth was born
In rapture of the enkindling morn,
Might godlike wrath and sunlike scorn
That was and is
And shall be while false weeds are worn
Find word like his.

Above the rude and radiant earth
That heaves and glows from firth to firth
In vale and mountain, bright in dearth
And warm in wealth,
Which gave his fiery glory birth
By chance and stealth,

Above the storms of praise and blame
That blur with mist his lustrous name,
His thunderous laughter went and came,
And lives and flies
The roar that follows on the flame
When lightning dies.

Earth, and the snow-dimmed heights of air,
And water winding soft and fair
Through still sweet places, bright and bare,
By bent and byre,
Taught him what hearts within them were:
But his was fire.

WILLIAM SCHWENK GILBERT (1836–1911)

THE YARN OF THE NANCY BELL

(1866) [1]

'Twas on the shores that round our coast
From Deal to Ramsgate span,
That I found alone on a piece of stone
An elderly naval man.

His hair was weedy, his beard was long,
And weedy and long was he,
And I heard this wight on the shore recite,
In a singular minor key:

"Oh, I am a cook and a captain bold,
And the mate of the *Nancy* brig,
And a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig."

And he shook his fists and he tore his hair,
Till I really felt afraid,
For I couldn't help thinking the man had been drinking,
And so I simply said:

"Oh, elderly man, it's little I know
Of the duties of men of the sea,
And I'll eat my hand if I understand
However you can be

"At once a cook, and a captain bold,
And the mate of the *Nancy* brig,
And a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig."

Then he gave a hitch to his trousers, which
Is a trick all seamen larn,
And having got rid of a thumping quid,
He spun this painful yarn:

"'Twas in the good ship *Nancy Bell*
That we sailed to the Indian Sea,
And there on a reef we come to grief,
Which has often occurred to me.

[1] The dates are those of the publication in *Fun*.

"And pretty nigh all the crew was drowned
(There was seventy-seven o' soul),
And only ten of the *Nancy's* men
Said 'Here!' to the muster-roll.

"There was me and the cook and the captain bold,
And the mate of the *Nancy* brig,
And the bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig.

"For a month we'd neither wittles nor drink,
Till a-hungry we did feel,
So we drawed a lot, and, accordin' shot
The captain for our meal.

"The next lot fell to the *Nancy's* mate,
And a delicate dish he made;
Then our appetite with the midshipmite
We seven survivors stayed.

"And then we murdered the bo'sun tight,
And he much resembled pig;
Then we wittled free, did the cook and me,
On the crew of the captain's gig.

"Then only the cook and me was left,
And the delicate question, 'Which
Of us two goes to the kettle?' arose,
And we argued it out as sich.

"For I loved that cook as a brother, I did,
And the cook he worshipped me;
But we'd both be blowed if we'd either be stowed
In the other chap's hold, you see.

"'I'll be eat if you dines off me,' says Tom;
'Yes, that,' says I, 'you'll be,—'
'I'm boiled if I die, my friend,' quoth I;
And 'Exactly so,' quoth he.

"Says he, 'Dear James, to murder me
Were a foolish thing to do,
For don't you see that you can't cook *me*,
While I can—and will—cook *you!*'

"So he boils the water, and takes the salt
And the pepper in portions true
(Which he never forgot), and some chopped shalot,
And some sage and parsley too.

"'Come here,' says he, with a proper pride,
Which his smiling features tell,
'Twill soothing be if I let you see
How extremely nice you'll smell.'

"And he stirred it round and round and round.
And he sniffed at the foaming froth;
When I ups with his heels, and smothers his squeals
In the scum of the boiling broth.

"And I eat that cook in a week or less,
And—as I eating be
The last of his chops, why, I almost drops,
For a wessel in sight I see!

. . . . . .

"And I never larf, and I never smile,
And I never lark nor play,
But sit and croak, and a single joke
I have—which is to say:

"'Oh, I am a cook and a captain bold,
And the mate of the *Nancy* brig,
And a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig!'"

TO MY BRIDE

WHOEVER SHE MAY BE

(1866)

Oh! little maid!—(I do not know your name
Or who you are, so, as a safe precaution
I'll add)—Oh, buxom widow! married dame!
(As one of these must be your present portion)
Listen, while I unveil prophetic lore for you,
And sing the fate that Fortune has in store for you.

You'll marry soon—within a year or twain—
A bachelor of *circa* two and thirty:
Tall, gentlemanly, but extremely plain,
And when you're intimate, you'll call him "Bertie."
Neat—dresses well; his temper has been classified
As hasty; but he's very quickly pacified.

You'll find him working mildly at the Bar,
After a touch at two or three professions,
From easy affluence extremely far,
A brief or two on Circuit—"soup" at Sessions;
A pound or two from whist and backing horses,
And, say three hundred from his own resources.

Quiet in harness; free from serious vice,
His faults are not particularly shady,
You'll never find him *"shy"*—for, once or twice
Already, he's been driven by a lady,
Who parts with him—perhaps a poor excuse for him—
Because she hasn't any further use for him.

Oh! bride of mine—tall, dumpy, dark, or fair!
Oh! widow—wife, maybe, or blushing maiden,
I've told *your* fortune; solved the gravest care
With which your mind has hitherto been laden.
I've prophesied correctly, never doubt it;
Now tell me mine—and please be quick about it!

You—only you—can tell me, an' you will,
To whom I'm destined shortly to be mated,
Will she run up a heavy *modiste's* bill?
If so, I want to hear her income stated
(This is a point which interests me greatly).
To quote the bard, "Oh! have I seen her lately?"

Say, must I wait till husband number one
Is comfortably stowed away at Woking?
How is her hair most usually done?
And tell me, please, will she object to smoking?
The color of her eyes, too, you may mention;
Come, Sibyl, prophesy—I'm all attention.

THE BISHOP OF RUM-TI-FOO

(1867)

From east and south the holy clan
Of bishops gathered, to a man;
To Synod, called Pan-Anglican;
In flocking crowds they came.
Among them was a Bishop, who
Had lately been appointed to
The balmy isle of Rum-ti-Foo,
And Peter was his name.

His people—twenty-three in sum—
They played the eloquent tum-tum
And lived on scalps served up in rum—
The only sauce they knew.
When first good Bishop Peter came
(For Peter was that Bishop's name),
To humor them, he did the same
As they of Rum-ti-Foo.

His flock, I've often heard him tell,
(His name was Peter) loved him well,
And summoned by the sound of bell,
In crowds together came.
"Oh, massa, why you go away?
Oh, Massa Peter, please to stay."
(They called him Peter, people say,
Because it was his name.)

He told them all good boys to be,
And sailed away across the sea,
At London Bridge that Bishop he
Arrived one Tuesday night—
And as that night he homeward strode
To his Pan-Anglican abode
He passed along the Borough Road
And saw a gruesome sight.

He saw a crowd assembled round
A person dancing on the ground,
Who straight began to leap and bound
With all his might and main.
To see that dancing man he stopped,
Who twirled and wriggled, skipped and hopped,
Then down incontinently dropped,
And then sprang up again.

The Bishop chuckled at the sight,
"This style of dancing would delight
A simple Rum-ti-Foozle-ite.
I'll learn it, if I can,
To please the tribe when I get back."
He begged the man to teach his knack.
"Right Reverend Sir, in half a crack,"
Replied that dancing man.

The dancing man he worked away
And taught the Bishop every day—
The dancer skipped like any fay—
Good Peter did the same.
The Bishop buckled to his task

With *battements,* cuts, and *pas de basque,*
(I'll tell you, if you care to ask,
That PETER was his name).

"Come, walk like this," the dancer said,
"Stick out your toes—stick in your head,
Stalk on with quick, galvanic tread—
Your fingers thus extend;
The attitude's considered quaint."
The weary Bishop, feeling faint,
Replied, "I do not say it ain't,
But 'Time!' my Christian friend!"

"We now proceed to something new—
Dance as the PAYNES and LAURIS do,
Like this—one, two—one, two—one, two."
The Bishop, never proud,
But in an overwhelming heat
(His name was PETER, I repeat)
Performed the PAYNE and LAURI feat,
And puffed his thanks aloud.

Another game the dancer planned—
"Just take your ankle in your hand,
And try, my lord, if you can stand—
Your body stiff and stark.
If when revisiting your see,
You learnt to hop on shore—like me—
The novelty must striking be,
And must excite remark."

"No," said the worthy Bishop, "No;
That is a length to which, I trow,
Colonial Bishops cannot go.
You may express surprise
At finding Bishops deal in pride—
But, if that trick I ever tried,
I should appear undignified
In Rum-ti-Foozle's eyes.

"The islanders of Rum-ti-Foo
Are well-conducted persons, who
Approve a joke as much as you,
And laugh at it as such;
But if they saw their Bishop land,
His leg supported in his hand,
The joke they wouldn't understand—
'Twould pain them very much!"

CAPTAIN REECE

(1868)

Of all the ships upon the blue
No ship contained a better crew
Than that of worthy CAPTAIN REECE,
Commanding of *The Mantelpiece.*

He was adored by all his men,
For worthy CAPTAIN REECE, R. N.,
Did all that lay within him to
Promote the comfort of his crew.

If ever they were dull or sad,
Their captain danced to them like mad,
Or told, to make the time pass by,
Droll legends of his infancy.

A feather bed had every man,
Warm slippers and hot water can,
Brown Windsor from the captain's store,
A valet, too, to every four.

Did they with thirst in summer burn,
Lo, seltzogenes at every turn,
And on all very sultry days
Cream ices handed round on trays.

Then currant wine and ginger pops
Stood handily on all the "tops;"
And also, with amusement rife,
A "Zoetrope, or Wheel of Life."

New volumes came across the sea
From MISTER MUDIE'S libraree;
The *Times* and *Saturday Review*
Beguiled the leisure of the crew.

Kind-hearted CAPTAIN REECE, R. N.,
Was quite devoted to his men;
In point of fact, good CAPTAIN REECE
Beatified *The Mantelpiece.*

One summer eve, at half-past ten,
He said (addressing all his men):
"Come, tell me, please, what I can do
To please and gratify my crew.

"By any reasonable plan
I'll make you happy if I can;
My own convenience count as *nil:*
It is my duty, and I will."

Then up and answered WILLIAM LEE
(The kindly captain's coxswain he,
A nervous, shy, low-spoken man),
He cleared his throat and thus began:

"You have a daughter, CAPTAIN REECE,
Ten female cousins and a niece,
A Ma, if what I'm told is true,
Six sisters, and an aunt or two.

"Now, somehow, sir, it seems to me,
More friendly-like we all should be,
If you united of 'em to
Unmarried members of the crew.

"If you'd ameliorate our life,
Let each select from them a wife;
And as for nervous me, old pal,
Give me your own enchanting gal!"

Good CAPTAIN REECE, that worthy man,
Debated on his coxswain's plan:
"I quite agree," he said, "O BILL;
It is my duty, and I will.

"My daughter, that enchanting gurl,
Has just been promised to an Earl,
And all my other familee
To peers of various degree.

"But what are dukes and viscounts to
The happiness of all my crew?
The word I gave you I'll fulfil;
It is my duty, and I will.

"As you desire it shall befall,
I'll settle thousands on you all,
And I shall be, despite my hoard,
The only bachelor on board."

The boatswain of *The Mantelpiece,*
He blushed and spoke to CAPTAIN REECE:
"I beg your honor's leave," he said;
"If you would wish to go and wed,

"I have a widowed mother who
Would be the very thing for you—
She long has loved you from afar;
She washes for you, CAPTAIN R."

The Captain saw the dame that day—
Addressed her in his playful way—
"And did it want a wedding ring?
It was a tempting ickle sing?

"Well, well, the chaplain I will seek,
We'll all be married this day week
At yonder church upon the hill;
It is my duty, and I will!"

The sisters, cousins, aunts, and niece,
And widowed Ma of CAPTAIN REECE,
Attended there as they were bid;
It was their duty, and they did.

GENTLE ALICE BROWN

(1868)

It was a robber's daughter, and her name
was Alice Brown;
Her father was the terror of a small Italian
town;
Her mother was a foolish, weak, but ami-
able old thing;
But it isn't of her parents that I'm going
for to sing.

As Alice was a-sitting at her window-sill
one day,
A beautiful young gentleman he chanced
to pass that way;
She cast her eyes upon him, and he looked
so good and true,
That she thought, "I could be happy with a
gentleman like you!"

And every morning passed her house that
cream of gentlemen,
She knew she might expect him at a quar-
ter unto ten,
A sorter in the Custom-house, it was his
daily road
(The Custom-house was fifteen minutes'
walk from her abode).

But Alice was a pious girl, who knew it
wasn't wise
To look at strange young sorters with ex-
pressive purple eyes;
So she sought the village priest to whom
her family confessed,
The priest by whom their little sins were
carefully assessed.

"O, holy father," Alice said, "'t would
grieve you, would it not?
To discover that I was a most disreputable
lot!
Of all unhappy sinners I'm the most un-
happy one!"
The padre said, "Whatever have you been
and gone and done?"

"I have helped mamma to steal a little
kiddy from its dad,
I've assisted dear papa in cutting up a little
lad.
I've planned a little burglary and forged a
little check,
And slain a little baby for the coral on its
neck!"

The worthy pastor heaved a sigh, and
dropped a silent tear—
And said, "You mustn't judge yourself too
heavily, my dear—
It's wrong to murder babies, little corals
for to fleece;

But sins like these one expiates at half-a-crown apiece.

"Girls will be girls—you're very young, and flighty in your mind;
Old heads upon young shoulders we must not expect to find:
We mustn't be too hard upon these little girlish tricks—
Let's see—five crimes at half-a-crown—exactly twelve-and-six."

"Oh, father," little Alice cried, "your kindness makes me weep,
You do these little things for me so singularly cheap—
Your thoughtful liberality I never can forget;
But, O, there is another crime I haven't mentioned yet!

"A pleasant-looking gentleman, with pretty purple eyes,
I've noticed at my window, as I've sat a-catching flies;
He passes by it every day as certain as can be—
I blush to say I've winked at him and he has winked at me!"

"For shame," said Father Paul, "my erring daughter! On my word
This is the most distressing news that I have ever heard.
Why, naughty girl, your excellent papa has pledged your hand
To a promising young robber, the lieutenant of his band!

"This dreadful piece of news will pain your worthy parents so!
They are the most remunerative customers I know;
For many many years they've kept starvation from my doors,
I never knew so criminal a family as yours!

"The common country folk in this insipid neighborhood
Have nothing to confess, they're so ridiculously good;
And if you marry any one respectable at all,
Why, you'll reform, and what will then become of Father Paul?"

The worthy priest, he up and drew his cowl upon his crown,
And started off in haste to tell the news to Robber Brown;
To tell him how his daughter, who now was for marriage fit,
Had winked upon a sorter, who reciprocated it.

Good Robber Brown he muffled up his anger pretty well,
He said "I have a notion, and that notion I will tell;
I will nab this gay young sorter, terrify him into fits,
And get my gentle wife to chop him into little bits.

"I've studied human nature, and I know a thing or two,
Though a girl may fondly love a living gent, as many do—
A feeling of disgust upon her senses there will fall
When she looks upon his body chopped particularly small."

He traced that gallant sorter to a still suburban square;
He watched his opportunity and seized him unaware;
He took a life-preserver and he hit him on the head,
And Mrs. Brown dissected him before she went to bed.

And pretty little Alice grew more settled in her mind,
She never more was guilty of a weakness of the kind,
Until at length good Robber Brown bestowed her pretty hand
On the promising young robber, the lieutenant of his band.

THE PERILS OF INVISIBILITY

(1870)

Old Peter led a wretched life—
Old Peter had a furious wife;
Old Peter too was truly stout,
He measured several yards about.

The little fairy Picklekin
One summer afternoon looked in,
And said, "Old Peter, how de do?
Can I do anything for you?

"I have three gifts—the first will give
Unbounded riches while you live;
The second health where'er you be,
The third, invisibility."

"O little fairy PICKLEKIN,"
Old PETER answered with a grin,
"To hesitate would be absurd,—
Undoubtedly I choose the third."

"'Tis yours," the fairy said; "be quite
Invisible to mortal sight
Whene'er you please. Remember me
Most kindly, pray, to MRS. P."

Old MRS. PETER overheard
Wee PICKLEKIN's concluding word,
And, jealous of her girlhood's choice,
Said, "That was some young woman's voice!"

Old PETER let her scold and swear—
Old PETER, bless him, didn't care.
"My dear, your rage is wasted quite—
Observe, I disappear from sight!"

A well-bred fairy (so I've heard)
Is always faithful to her word:
Old PETER vanished like a shot,
But then—*his suit of clothes did not!*

For when conferred the fairy slim
Invisibility on *him,*
She popped away on fairy wings,
Without referring to his "things."

So there remained a coat of blue,
A vest and double eyeglass too,
His tail, his shoes, his socks as well,
His pair of—no, I must not tell.

Old MRS. PETER soon began
To see the failure of his plan,
And then resolved (I quote the Bard)
To "hoist him with his own petard."

Old PETER woke next day and dressed,
Put on his coat, and shoes, and vest,
His shirt and stock; *but could not find*
His only pair of—never mind!

Old PETER was a decent man,
And though he twigged his lady's plan,
Yet, hearing her approaching, he
Resumed invisibility.

"Dear MRS. P., my only joy,"
Exclaimed the horrified old boy,
"Now, give them up, I beg of you—
You know what I'm referring to!"

But no; the cross old lady swore
She'd keep his—what I said before—
To make him publicly absurd;
And MRS. PETER kept her word.

The poor old fellow had no rest;
His coat, his stock, his shoes, his vest,
Were all that now met mortal eye—
The rest, invisibility!

"Now, madam, give them up, I beg—
I've bad rheumatics in my leg;
Besides, until you do, it's plain
I cannot come to sight again!

"For though some mirth it might afford
To see my clothes without their lord,
Yet there would rise indignant oaths
If he were seen without his clothes!"

But no; resolved to have her quiz,
The lady held her own—and his—
And PETER left his humble cot
To find a pair of—you know what.

But—here's the worst of the affair—
Whene'er he came across a pair
Already placed for him to don,
He was too stout to get them on!

So he resolved at once to train,
And walked and walked with all his main;
For years he paced this mortal earth,
To bring himself to decent girth.

At night, when all around is still,
You'll find him pounding up a hill;
And shrieking peasants whom he meets,
Fall down in terror on the peats!

Old PETER walks through wind and rain,
Resolved to train, and train and train,
Until he weighs twelve stone or so—
And when he does, I'll let you know.

GEORGE MEREDITH (1828–1909)

THE WOODS OF WESTERMAIN

(1883)

I

Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare.
Nothing harms beneath the leaves
More than waves a swimmer cleaves.
Toss your heart up with the lark,
Foot at peace with mouse and worm,
Fair you fare.
Only at a dread of dark
Quaver, and they quit their form:
Thousand eyeballs under hoods
Have you by the hair.
Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare.

II

Here the snake across your path
Stretches in his golden bath:
Mossy-footed squirrels leap
Soft as winnowing plumes of Sleep:
Yaffles on a chuckle skim
Low to laugh from branches dim:
Up the pine, where sits the star,
Rattles deep the moth-winged jar.
Each has business of his own;
But should you distrust a tone,
Then beware.
Shudder all the haunted roods,
All the eyeballs under hoods
Shroud you in their glare.
Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare.

III

Open hither, open hence,
Scarce a bramble weaves a fence,
Where the strawberry runs red,
With white star-flower overhead;
Cumbered by dry twig and cone,
Shredded husks of seedlings flown,
Mine of mole and spotted flint:
Of dire wizardry no hint,
Save mayhap the print that shows
Hasty outward-tripping toes,
Heels to terror, on the mould.
These, the woods of Westermain,
Are as others to behold,
Rich of wreathing sun and rain;
Foliage lustreful around
Shadowed leagues of slumbering sound.
Wavy tree-tops, yellow whins,
Shelter eager minikins,
Myriads, free to peck and pipe:
Would you better? would you worse?
You with them may gather ripe
Pleasures flowing not from purse.
Quick and far as Color flies
Taking the delighted eyes,
You of any well that springs
May unfold the heaven of things;
Have it homely and within,
And thereof its likeness win,
Will you so in soul's desire:
This do sages grant t' the lyre.
This is being bird and more,
More than glad musician this;
Granaries you will have a store
Past the world of woe and bliss;
Sharing still its bliss and woe;
Harnessed to its hungers, no.
On the throne Success usurps,
You shall seat the joy you feel
Where a race of water chirps,
Twisting hues of flourished steel:
Or where light is caught in hoop
Up a clearing's leafy rise,
Where the crossing deerherds troop
Classic splendors, knightly dyes.
Or, where old-eyed oxen chew
Speculation with the cud,
Read their pool of vision through,
Back to hours when mind was mud;
Nigh the knot, which did untwine
Timelessly to drowsy suns;
Seeing Earth a slimy spine,
Heaven a space for winging tons.
Farther, deeper, may you read,
Have you sight for things afield,
Where peeps she, the Nurse of seed,
Cloaked, but in the peep revealed;
Showing a kind face and sweet:
Look you with the soul, you see 't.
Glory narrowing to grace,

Grace to glory magnified,
Following that will you embrace
Close in arms or aëry wide.
Banished is the white Foam-born
Not from here, nor under ban
Phœbus lyrist, Phœbe's horn,
Pipings of the reedy Pan.
Loved of Earth of old they were,
Loving did interpret her;
And the sterner worship bars
None whom Song has made her stars.
You have seen the huntress moon
Radiantly facing dawn,
Dusky meads between them strewn
Glimmering like downy awn:
Argent Westward glows the hunt,
East the blush about to climb;
One another fair they front,
Transient, yet outshine the time;
Even as dewlight off the rose
In the mind a jewel sows.
Thus opposing grandeurs live
Here if Beauty be their dower:
Doth she of her spirit give,
Fleetingness will spare her flower.
This is in the tune we play,
Which no spring of strength would quell;
In subduing does not slay;
Guides the channel, guards the well:
Tempered holds the young blood-heat,
Yet through measured grave accord,
Hears the heart of wildness beat
Like a centaur's hoof on sward.
Drink the sense the notes infuse,
You a larger self will find:
Sweetest fellowship ensues
With the creatures of your kind.
Ay, and Love, if Love it be
Flaming over *I* and *ME*,
Love meet they who do not shove
Cravings in the van of Love.
Courtly dames are here to woo,
Knowing love if it be true.
Reverence the blossom-shoot
Fervently, they are the fruit.
Mark them stepping, hear them talk,
Goddess, is no myth inane,
You will say of those who walk
In the woods of Westermain.
Waters that from throat and thigh
Dart the sun his arrows back;
Leaves that on a woodland sigh
Chat of secret things no lack;
Shadowy branch-leaves, waters clear.
Bare or veiled they move sincere;
Not by slavish terrors tripped;
Being anew in nature dipped,
Growths of what they step on, these;
With the roots the grace of trees.
Casket-breasts they give, nor hide,
For a tyrant's flattered pride,
Mind, which nourished not by light,
Lurks the shuffling trickster sprite:
Whereof are strange tales to tell;
Some in blood writ, tombed in bell.
Here the ancient battle ends,
Joining two astonished friends,
Who the kiss can give and take
With more warmth than in that world
Where the tiger claws the snake,
Snake her tiger clasps infurled,
And the issue of their fight
Peoples lands in snarling plight.
Here her splendid beast she leads
Silken-leashed and decked with weeds
Wild as he, but breathing faint
Sweetness of unfelt constraint.
Love, the great volcano, flings
Fires of lower Earth to sky;
Love, the sole permitted, sings
Sovereignly of *ME* and *I*.
Bowers he has of sacred shade,
Spaces of superb parade,
Voiceful . . . But bring you a note
Wrangling, howsoe'er remote,
Discords out of discord spin
Round and round derisive din:
Sudden will a pallor pant
Chill at screeches miscreant;
Owls or spectres, thick they flee;
Nightmare upon horror broods;
Hooded laughter, monkish glee,
Gaps the vital air.
Enter these enchanted woods
You who dare.

IV

You must love the light so well
That no darkness will seem fell.
Love it so you could accost
Fellowly a livid ghost.
Whish! The phantom wisps away,
Owns him smoke to cocks of day.
In your breast the light must burn
Fed of you, like corn in quern
Ever plumping while the wheel
Speeds the mill and drains the meal.
Light to light sees little strange,
Only features heavenly new;
Then you touch the nerve of Change,
Then of Earth you have the clue;
Then her two-sexed meanings melt
Through you, wed the thought and felt.
Sameness locks no scurfy pond

Here for Custom, crazy-fond:
Change is on the wing to bud
Rose in brain from rose in blood.
Wisdom throbbing shall you see
Central in complexity;
From her pasture 'mid the beasts
Rise to her ethereal feasts,
Not, though lightnings track your wit
Starward, scorning them you quit:
For be sure the bravest wing
Preens it in our common spring,
Thence along the vault to soar,
You with others, gathering more,
Glad of more, till you reject
Your proud title of elect,
Perilous even here while few
Roam the arched greenwood with you.
Heed that snare.
Muffled by his cavern-cowl
Squats the scaly Dragon-fowl,
Who was lord ere light you drank,
And lest blood of knightly rank
Stream, let not your fair princess
Stray: he holds the leagues in stress,
Watches keenly there.
Oft has he been riven; slain
Is no force in Westermain.
Wait, and we shall forge him curbs,
Put his fangs to uses, tame,
Teach him, quick as cunning herbs,
How to cure him sick and lame.
Much restricted, much enringed,
Much he frets, the hooked and winged,
Never known to spare.
'T is enough: the name of Sage
Hits no thing in nature, nought;
Man the least, save when grave Age
From yon Dragon guards his thought.
Eye him when you hearken dumb
To what words from Wisdom come,
When she says how few are by
Listening to her, eye his eye.
Self, his name declare.
Him shall Change, transforming late,
Wonderously renovate.
Hug himself the creature may:
What he hugs is loathed decay.
Crying, slip thy scales, and slough!
Change will strip his armor off;
Make of him who was all maw,
Inly only thrilling-shrewd,
Such a servant as none saw
Through his days of dragonhood.
Days when growling o'er his bone,
Sharpened he for mine and thine;
Sensitive within alone;
Scaly as in clefts of pine.
Change, the strongest son of Life,
Has the Spirit here to wife.
Lo, their young of vivid breed,
Bear the lights that onward speed,
Threading thickets, mounting glades,
Up the verdurous colonnades,
Round the fluttered curves, and down,
Out of sight of Earth's blue crown,
Whither, in her central space,
Spouts the Fount and Lure o' the chase.
Fount unresting, Lure divine!
There meet all: too late look most.
Fire in water hued as wine,
Springs amid a shadowy host;
Circled: one close-headed mob,
Breathless, scanning divers heaps
Where a Heart begins to throb,
Where it ceases, slow, with leaps,
And 't is very strange, 't is said,
How you spy in each of them
Semblance of that Dragon red,
As the oak in bracken-stem.
And, 't is said, how each and each:
Which commences, which subsides:
First my Dragon! doth beseech
Her who food for all provides.
And she answers with no sign;
Utters neither yea nor nay;
Fires the water hued as wine;
Kneads another spark in clay.
Terror is about her hid;
Silence of the thunders locked;
Lightnings lining the shut lid;
Fixity on quaking rocked.
Lo, you look at Flow and Drought
Interflashed and interwrought:
Ended is begun, begun
Ended, quick as torrents run.
Young Impulsion spouts to sink;
Luridness and lustre link;
'T is your come and go of breath;
Mirrored pants the Life, the Death;
Each of either reaped and sown:
Rosiest rosy wanes to crone.
See you so? your senses drift;
'T is a shuttle weaving swift.
Look with spirit past the sense,
Spirit shines in permanence.
That is She, the view of whom
Is the dust within the tomb,
Is the inner blush above,
Look to loathe, or look to love;
Think her Lump, or know her Flame;
Dread her scourge, or read her aim;
Shoot your hungers from their nerve;
Or, in her example, serve.
Some have found her sitting grave;
Laughing, some; or, browed with sweat,
Hurling dust of fool and knave

In a hissing smithy's jet.
More it were not well to speak;
Burn to see, you need but seek.
Once beheld she gives the key
Airing every doorway, she.
Little can you stop or steer
Ere of her you are the seër.
On the surface she will witch,
Rendering Beauty yours, but gaze
Under, and the soul is rich
Past computing, past amaze.
Then is courage that endures
Even her awful tremble yours.
Then, the reflex of that Fount
Spied below, will Reason mount
Lordly and a quenchless force,
Lighting Pain to its mad source,
Scaring Fear till Fear escapes,
Shot through all its phantom shapes.
Then your spirit will perceive
Fleshly seed of fleshly sins;
Where the passions interweave,
How the serpent tangle spins
Of the sense of Earth misprised,
Brainlessly unrecognized;
She being Spirit in her clods,
Footway to the God of Gods.
Then for you are pleasures pure,
Sureties as the stars are sure:
Not the wanton beckoning flags
Which, of flattery and delight,
Wax to the grim Habit-Hags
Riding souls of men to night:
Pleasures that through blood run sane,
Quickening spirit from the brain.
Each of each in sequent birth,
Blood and brain and spirit, three
(Say the deepest gnomes of Earth),
Join for true felicity.
Are they parted, then expect
Some one sailing will be wrecked:
Separate hunting are they sped,
Scan the morsel coveted.
Earth that Triad is: she hides
Joy from him who that divides;
Showers it when the three are one
Glassing her in union.
Earth your haven, Earth your helm,
You command a double realm:
Laboring here to pay your debt,
Till your little sun shall set;
Leaving her the future task:
Loving her too well to ask.
Eglantine that climbs the yew,
She her darkest wreathes for those
Knowing her the Ever-new,
And themselves the kin o' the rose.
Life, the chisel, axe and sword,
Wield who have her depths explored:
Life, the dream, shall be their robe,
Large as air about the globe;
Life, the question, hear its cry
Echoed with concordant Why;
Life, the small self-dragon ramped,
Thrill for service to be stamped.
Ay, and over every height
Life for them shall wave a wand:
That, the last, where sits affright,
Homely shows the stream beyond.
Love the light and be its lynx,
You will track her and attain;
Read her as no cruel Sphinx
In the woods of Westermain.
Daily fresh the woods are ranged;
Glooms which otherwise appal,
Sounded: here, their worths exchanged,
Urban joins with pastoral:
Little lost, save what may drop
Husk-like, and the mind preserves.
Natural overgrowths they lop,
Yet from nature neither swerves,
Trained or savage: for this cause:
Of our Earth they ply the laws,
Have in Earth their feeding root,
Mind of man and bent of brute.
Hear that song; both wild and ruled.
Hear it: is it wail or mirth?
Ordered, bubbled, quite unschooled?
None, and all: it springs of Earth.
O but hear it! 't is the mind;
Mind that with deep Earth unites,
Round the solid trunk to wind
Rings of clasping parasites.
Music have you there to feed
Simplest and most soaring need.
Free to wind, and in desire
Winding, they to her attached
Feel the trunk a spring of fire.
And ascend to heights unmatched,
Whence the tidal world is viewed
As a sea of windy wheat,
Momently black, barren, rude;
Golden-brown, for harvest meet;
Dragon-reaped from folly-sown;
Bride-like to the sickle-blade:
Quick it varies, while the moan,
Moan of a sad creature strayed,
Chiefly is its voice. So flesh
Conjures tempest-flails to thresh
Good from worthless. Some clear lamps
Light it; more of dead marsh-damps.
Monster is it still, and blind,
Fit but to be led by Pain.
Glance we at the paths behind,
Fruitful sight has Westermain.
There we labored, and in turn

Forward our blown lamps discern,
As you see on the dark deep
Far the loftier billows leap,
Foam for beacon bear.
Hither, hither, if you will,
Drink instruction, or instil,
Run the woods like vernal sap,
Crying, hail to luminousness!
But have care.
In yourself may lurk the trap:
On conditions they caress.
Here you meet the light invoked:
Here is never secret cloaked.
Doubt you with the monster's fry
All his orbit may exclude;
Are you of the stiff, the dry,
Cursing the not understood;
Grasp you with the monster's claws;
Govern with his truncheon-saws;
Hate, the shadow of a grain;
You are lost in Westermain:
Earthward swoops a vulture sun,
Nighted upon carrion:
Straightway venom winecups shout
Toasts to One whose eyes are out:
Flowers along the reeling floor
Drip henbane and hellebore:
Beauty, of her tresses shorn,
Shrieks as nature's maniac:
Hideousness on hoof and horn
Tumbles, yapping in her track:
Haggard Wisdom, stately once,
Leers fantastical and trips:
Allegory drums the sconce,
Impiousness nibblenips.
Imp that dances, imp that flits,
Imp o' the demon-growing girl,
Maddest! whirl with imp o' the pits
Round you, and with them you whirl
Fast where pours the fountain-rout
Out of Him whose eyes are out:
Multitudes on multitudes,
Drenched in wallowing devilry:
And you ask where you may be,
In what reek of a lair
Given to bones and ogre-broods:
And they yell you Where.
Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare.

THE NUPTIALS OF ATTILA

(1879)

I

Flat as to an eagle's eye,
Earth hung under Attila.
Sign for carnage gave he none.
In the peace of his disdain,
Sun and rain, and rain and sun,
Cherished men to wax again,
Crawl, and in their manner die.
On his people stood a frost.
Like the charger cut in stone,
Rearing stiff, the warrior host,
Which had life from him alone,
Craved the trumpet's eager note,
As the bridled earth the Spring.
Rusty was the trumpet's throat.
He let chief and prophet rave;
Venturous earth around him string
Threads of grass and slender rye,
Wave them, and untrampled wave.
O for the time when God did cry,
Eye and have, my Attila!

II

Scorn of conquest filled like sleep
Him that drank of havoc deep
When the Green Cat pawed the globe:
When the horsemen from his bow
Shot in sheaves and made the foe
Crimson fringes of a robe,
Trailed o'er towns and fields in woe;
When they streaked the rivers red,
When the saddle was the bed.
Attila, my Attila!

III

He breathed peace and pulled a flower.
Eye and have, my Attila!
This was the damsel Ildico,
Rich in bloom until that hour:
Shyer than the forest doe
Twinkling slim through branches green.
Yet the shyest shall be seen.
Make the bed for Attila!

IV

Seen of Attila, desired,
She was led to him straightway:
Radiantly was she attired;
Rifled lands were her array,
Jewels bled from weeping crowns,
Gold of woeful fields and towns.
She stood pallid in the light.
How she walked, how withered white,
From the blessing to the board,
She who should have proudly blushed,
Women whispered, asking why,
Hinting of a youth, and hushed.
Was it terror of her lord?

Was she childish? was she sly?
Was it the bright mantle's dye
Drained her blood to hues of grief
Like the ash that shoots the spark?
See the green tree all in leaf:
See the green tree stripped of bark!—
Make the bed for Attila!

V

Round the banquet-table's load
Scores of iron horsemen rode;
Chosen warriors, keen and hard;
Grain of threshing battle-dints;
Attila's fierce body-guard,
Smelling war like fire in flints.
Grant them peace be fugitive!
Iron-capped and iron-heeled,
Each against his fellow's shield
Smote the spear-head, shouting, Live,
Attila! my Attila!
Eagle, eagle of our breed,
Eagle, beak the lamb, and feed!
Have her, and unleash us! live,
Attila! my Attila!

VI

He was of the blood to shine
Bronze in joy, like skies that scorch.
Beaming with the goblet wine
In the wavering of the torch,
Looked he backward on his bride.
Eye and have, my Attila!
Fair in her wide robe was she:
Where the robe and vest divide,
Fair she seemed surpassingly:
Soft, yet vivid as the stream
Danube rolls in the moonbeam
Through rock-barriers: but she smiled
Never, she sat cold as salt:
Open-mouthed as a young child
Wondering with a mind at fault.
Make the bed for Attila!

VII

Under the thin hoop of gold
Whence in waves her hair outrolled,
'Twixt her brows the women saw
Shadows of a vulture's claw
Gript in flight: strange knots that sped
Closing and dissolving aye:
Such as wicked dreams betray
When pale dawn creeps o'er the bed.
They might show the common pang
Known to virgins, in whom dread
Hunts their bliss like famished hounds;
While the chiefs with roaring rounds
Tossed her to her lord, and sang
Praise of him whose hand was large,
Cheers for beauty brought to yield,
Chirrups of the trot afield,
Hurrahs of the battle-charge.

VIII

Those rock-faces hung with weed
Reddened: their great days of speed,
Slaughter, triumph, flood and flame,
Like a jealous frenzy wrought,
Scoffed at them and did them shame,
Quaffing idle, conquering naught.
O for the time when God decreed
Earth the prey of Attila!
God called on thee in his wrath,
Trample it to mire! 'Twas done.
Swift as Danube clove our path
Down from East to Western sun.
Huns! behold your pasture, gaze,
Take, our king said: heel to flank
(Whisper it, the warhorse neighs!)
Forth we drove, and blood we drank
Fresh as dawn-dew: earth was ours:
Men were flocks we lashed and spurned:
Fast as windy flame devours,
Flame along the wind, we burned.
Arrow, javelin, spear, and sword!
Here the snows and there the plains;
On! our signal: onward poured
Torrents of the tightened reins,
Foaming over vine and corn
Hot against the city-wall.
Whisper it, you sound a horn
To the grey beast in the stall!
Yea, he whinnies at a nod.
O for sound of the trumpet-notes!
O for the time when, thunder-shod,
He that scarce can munch his oats
Hung on the peaks, brooded aloof,
Champed the grain of the wrath of God,
Pressed a cloud on the cowering roof,
Snorted out of the blackness fire!
Scarlet broke the sky, and down,
Hammering West with print of his hoof,
He burst out of the bosom of ire
Sharp as eyelight under thy frown,
Attila! my Attila!

IX

Ravaged cities rolling smoke
Thick on cornfields dry and black
Wave his banners, bear his yoke.
Track the lightning, and you track
Attila. They moan: 'tis he!

Bleed: 'tis he! Beneath his foot
Leagues are deserts charred and mute;
Where he passed, there passed a sea.
Attila! my Attila!

X

—Who breathed on the king cold breath?
Said a voice amid the host,
He is Death that weds a ghost,
Else a ghost that weds with Death?
Ildico's chill little hand
Shuddering he beheld: austere
Stared, as one who would command
Sight of what has filled his ear:
Plucked his thin beard, laughed disdain.
Feast, ye Huns! His arm he raised,
Like the warrior, battle-dazed,
Joining to the fight amain.
Make the bed for Attila!

XI

Silent Ildico stood up.
King and chief to pledge her well
Shocked sword sword and cup on cup,
Clamoring like a brazen bell.
Silent stepped the queenly slave.
Fair, by heaven! she was to meet
On a midnight, near a grave,
Flapping wide the winding-sheet.

XII

Death and she walked through the crowd,
Out beyond the flush of light,
Ceremonious women bowed
Following her: 'twas middle night.
Then the warriors each on each
Spied, nor overloudly laughed;
Like the victims of the leech,
Who have drunk of a strange draught.

XIII

Attila remained. Even so
Frowned he when he struck the blow,
Brained his horse that stumbled twice,
On a bloody day in Gaul,
Bellowing, Perish omens! All
Marvelled at the sacrifice,
But the battle, swinging dim,
Rang off that axe-blow for him.
Attila! my Attila!

XIV

Brightening over Danube wheeled
Star by star; and she, most fair,
Sweet as victory half-revealed,
Seized to make him glad and young;
She, O sweet as the dark sign
Given him oft in battles gone,
When the voice within said, Dare!
And the trumpet-notes were sprung
Rapturous for the charge in line:
She lay waiting: fair as dawn
Wrapped in folds of night she lay;
Secret, lustrous; flaglike there,
Waiting him to stream and ray,
With one loosening blush outflung,
Colors of his hordes of horse
Ranked for combat: still he hung
Like the fever-dreading air,
Cursed of heat; and as a corse
Gathers vultures, in his brain
Images of her eyes and kiss
Plucked at the limbs that could remain
Loitering nigh the doors of bliss.
Make the bed for Attila!

XV

Passion on one hand, on one
Destiny led forth the Hun.
Heard ye outcries of affright,
Voices that through many a fray,
In the press of flag and spear,
Warned the king of peril near?
Men were dumb, they gave him way,
Eager heads to left and right,
Like the bearded standard, thrust,
As in battle, for a nod
From their lord of battle-dust.
Attila! my Attila!
Slow between the lines he trod.
Saw ye not the sun drop slow
On this nuptial day, ere eve
Pierced him on the couch aglow?
Attila, my Attila!
Here and there his heart would cleave
Clotted memory for a space:
Some stout chief's familiar face,
Choicest of his fighting brood,
Touched him, as 'twere one to know
Ere he met his bride's embrace.
Attila, my Attila!
Twisting fingers in a beard
Scant as winter underwood,
With a narrowed eye he peered;
Like the sunset's graver red
Up old pine-stems. Grave he stood
Eyeing them on whom was shed
Burning light from him alone.
Attila, my Attila!
Red were they whose mouths recalled
Where the slaughter mounted high,

High on it, o'er earth appalled,
He; heaven's finger in their sight
Raising him on waves of dead:
Up to heaven his trumpets blown.
O for the time when God's delight
Crowned the head of Attila!
Hungry river of the crag
Stretching hands for earth he came:
Force and Speed astride his name
Pointed back to spear and flag.
He came out of miracle cloud,
Lightning-swift and spectre-lean.
Now those days are in a shroud:
Have him to his ghostly queen.
Make the bed for Attila!

XVI

One, with winecups overstrung,
Cried him farewell in Rome's tongue.
Who? for the great king turned as though
Wrath to the shaft's head strained the bow.
Nay, not wrath the king possessed,
But a radiance of the breast.
In that sound he had the key
Of his cunning malady.
Lo, where gleamed the sapphire lake,
Leo, with his Rome at stake,
Drew blank air to hues and forms;
Whereof Two that shone distinct,[1]
Linked as orbèd stars are linked,
Clear among the myriad swarms,
In a constellation, dashed
Full on horse and rider's eyes
Sunless light, but light it was—
Light that blinded and abashed,
Froze his members, bade him pause,
Caught him mid-gallop, blazed him home.
Attila, my Attila!
What are streams that cease to flow?
What was Attila, rolled thence,
Cheated by a juggler's show?
Like that lake of blue intense,
Under tempest lashed to foam,
Lurid radiance, as he passed,
Filled him, and around was glassed,
When deep-voiced he uttered, Rome!

XVII

Rome! the word was; and like meat
Flung to dogs the word was torn.
Soon Rome's magic priests shall bleat
Round their magic Pope forlorn!
Loud they swore the king had sworn
Vengeance on the Roman cheat,
Ere he passed as, grave and still,
Danube through the shouting hill:
Sworn it by his naked life!
Eagle, snakes these women are:
Take them on the wing! but war,
Smoking war's the warrior's wife!
Then for plunder! then for brides
Won without a winking priest!—
Danube whirled his train of tides
Black toward the yellow East.
Make the bed for Attila!

XVIII

Chirrups of the trot afield,
Hurrahs of the battle-charge,
How they answered, how they pealed,
When the morning rose and drew
Bow and javelin, lance and targe,
In the nuptial casement's view!
Attila, my Attila!
Down the hillspurs, out of tents
Glimmering in mid-forest, through
Mists of the cool morning scents,
Forth from city-alley, court,
Arch, the bounding horsemen flew,
Joined along the plains of dew,
Raced and gave the rein to sport,
Closed and streamed like curtain-rents
Fluttered by a wind, and flowed
Into squadrons: trumpets blew,
Chargers neighed, and trappings glowed
Brave as the bright Orient's.
Look on the seas that run to greet
Sunrise: look on the leagues of wheat:
Look on the lines and squares that fret
Leaping to level the lance blood-wet.
Tens of thousands, man and steed,
Tossing like field-flowers in Spring;
Ready to be hurled at need
Whither their great lord may sling.
Finger Romeward, Romeward, King!
Attila, my Attila!
Still the woman holds him fast
As a night-flag round the mast.

XIX

Nigh upon the fiery noon,
Out of ranks a roaring burst.
'Ware white women like the moon!
They are poison: they have thirst
First for love, and next for rule.
Jealous of the army, she?
Ho, the little wanton fool!
We were his before she squealed
Blind for mother's milk, and heeled

[1] According to tradition, Pope Leo had awed Attila by creating apparitions in the air, and so had saved Rome.

Kicking on her mother's knee.
His in life and death are we:
She but one flower of a field.
We have given him bliss tenfold
In an hour to match her night:
Attila, my Attila!
Still her arms the master hold,
As on wounds the scarf winds tight.

XX

Over Danube day no more,
Like the warrior's planted spear,
Stood to hail the King: in fear
Western day knocked at his door.
Attila, my Attila!
Sudden in the army's eyes
Rolled a blast of lights and cries:
Flashing through them: Dead are ye!
Dead, ye Huns, and torn piecemeal!
See the ordered army reel
Stricken through the ribs: and see,
Wild for speed to cheat despair,
Horsemen, clutching knee to chin,
Crouch and dart they know not where.
Attila, my Attila!
Faces covered, faces bare,
Light the palace-front like jets
Of a dreadful fire within.
Beating hands and driving hair
Start on roof and parapets.
Dust rolls up; the slaughter din.
—Death to them who call him dead!
Death to them who doubt the tale!
Choking in his dusty veil,
Sank the sun on his death-bed.
Make the bed for Attila!

XXI

'Tis the room where thunder sleeps.
Frenzy, as a wave to shore
Surging, burst the silent door,
And drew back to awful deeps,
Breath beaten out, foam-white. Anew
Howled and pressed the ghastly crew,
Like storm-waters over rocks.
Attila, my Attila!
One long shaft of sunset red
Laid a finger on the bed.
Horror, with the snaky locks,
Shocked the surge to stiffened heaps,
Hoary as the glacier's head
Faced to the moon. Insane they look.
God it is in heaven who weeps
Fallen from his hand the Scourge he shook.
Make the bed for Attila!

XXII

Square along the couch, and stark,
Like the sea-rejected thing
Sea-sucked white, behold their King.
Attila, my Attila!
Beams that panted black and bright,
Scornful lightnings danced their sight:
Him they see an oak in bud,
Him an oaklog stripped of bark:
Him, their lord of day and night,
White, and lifting up his blood
Dumb for vengeance. Name us that,
Huddled in the corner dark,
Humped and grinning like a cat,
Teeth for lips!—'tis she! she stares,
Glittering through her bristled hairs.
Rend her! Pierce her to the hilt!
She is Murder: have her out!
What! this little fist, as big
As the southern summer fig!
She is Madness, none may doubt.
Death, who dares deny her guilt!
Death, who says his blood she spilt!
Make the bed for Attila!

XXIII

Torch and lamp and sunset-red
Fell three-fingered on the bed.
In the torch the beard-hair scant
With the great breast seemed to pant:
In the yellow lamp the limbs
Wavered, as the lake-flower swims:
In the sunset red the dead
Dead avowed him, dry blood-red.

XXIV

Hatred of that abject slave,
Earth, was in each chieftain's heart.
Earth has got him, whom God gave,
Earth may sing, and earth shall smart!
Attila, my Attila!

XXV

Thus their prayer was raved and ceased.
Then had Vengeance of her feast
Scent in their quick pang to smite
Which they knew not, but huge pain
Urged them for some victim slain
Swift, and blotted from the sight.
Each at each, a crouching beast,
Glared, and quivered for the word.
Each at each, and all on that,
Humped and grinning like a cat,
Head-bound with its bridal-wreath.

Then the bitter chamber heard
Vengeance in a cauldron seethe.
Hurried counsel rage and craft
Yelped to hungry men, whose teeth
Hard the grey lip-ringlet gnawed,
Gleaming till their fury laughed.
With the steel-hilt in the clutch,
Eyes were shot on her that froze
In their blood-thirst overawed;
Burned to rend, yet feared to touch.
She that was his nuptial rose,
She was of his heart's blood clad:
Oh! the last of him she had!—
Could a little fist as big
As the southern summer fig
Push a dagger's point to pierce
Ribs like those? Who else! They glared
Each at each. Suspicion fierce
Many a black remembrance bared.
Attila, my Attila!
Death, who dares deny her guilt!
Death, who says his blood she spilt!
Traitor he, who stands between!
Swift to hell, who harms the queen!
She, the wild contention's cause,
Combed her hair with quiet paws.
Make the bed for Attila!

XXVI

Night was on the host in arms.
Night, as never night before,
Hearkened to an army's roar
Breaking up in snaky swarms:
Torch and steel and snorting steed,
Hunted by the cry of blood,
Cursed with blindness, mad for day.
Where the torches ran a flood,
Tales of him and of the deed
Showered like a torrent spray.
Fear of silence made them strive
Loud in warrior-hymns that grew
Hoarse for slaughter yet unwreaked.
Ghostly Night across the hive
With a crimson finger drew
Letters on her breast and shrieked.
Night was on them like the mould
On the buried half alive.
Night, their bloody Queen, her fold
Wound on them and struck them through.
Make the bed for Attila!

XXVII

Earth has got him whom God gave,
Earth may sing, and earth shall smart!
None of earth shall know his grave.
They that dig with Death depart.
Attila, my Attila!

XXVIII

Thus their prayer was raved and passed:
Passed in peace their red sunset:
Hewn and earthed those men of sweat
Who had housed him in the vast,
Where no mortal might declare,
There lies he—his end was there!
Attila, my Attila!

XXIX

Kingless was the army left:
Of its head the race bereft.
Every fury of the pit
Tortured and dismembered it.
Lo, upon a silent hour,
When the pitch of frost subsides,
Danube with a shout of power
Loosens his imprisoned tides:
Wide around the frighted plains
Shake to hear his riven chains,
Dreadfuller than heaven in wrath,
As he makes himself a path:
High leap the ice-cracks, towering pile
Floes to bergs, and giant peers
Wrestle on a drifted isle;
Island on ice-island rears;
Dissolution battles fast:
Big the senseless Titans loom,
Through a mist of common doom
Striving which shall die the last:
Till a gentle-breathing morn
Frees the stream from bank to bank:
So the Empire built of scorn
Agonized, dissolved and sank.
Of the Queen no more was told
Than of leaf on Danube rolled.
Make the bed for Attila!

JUGGLING JERRY

(1859)

I

Pitch here the tent, while the old horse grazes:
By the old hedge-side we'll halt a stage.
It's nigh my last above the daisies:
My next leaf'll be man's blank page.
Yes, my old girl! and it's no use crying:
Juggler, constable, king, must bow.
One that outjuggles all's been spying
Long to have me, and he has me now.

II

We've travelled times to this old common:
Often we've hung our pots in the gorse.
We've had a stirring life, old woman
You, and I, and the old grey horse.
Races, and fairs, and royal occasions,
Found us coming to their call:
Now they'll miss us at our stations:
There's a Juggler outjuggles all!

III

Up goes the lark as if all were jolly!
Over the duck-pond the willow shakes.
Easy to think that grieving's folly,
When the hand's firm as driven stakes!
Ay, when we're strong, and braced, and manful,
Life's a sweet fiddle: but we're a batch
Born to become the Great Juggler's han'ful:
Balls he shies up, and is safe to catch.

IV

Here's where the lads of the village cricket:
I was a lad not wide from here:
Couldn't I whip off the bail from the wicket?
Like an old world those days appear!
Donkey, sheep, geese, and thatched alehouse—I know them!
They are old friends of my halts, and seem,
Somehow, as if kind thanks I owe them:
Juggling don't hinder the heart's esteem.

V

Juggling's no sin, for we must have victual:
Nature allows us to bait for the fool.
Holding one's own makes us juggle no little;
But, to increase it, hard juggling's the rule.
You that are sneering at my profession,
Haven't you juggled a vast amount?
There's the Prime Minister, in one Session,
Juggles more games than my sins'll count.

VI

I've murdered insects with mock thunder:
Conscience, for that, in men don't quail.
I've made bread from the bump of wonder:
That's my business, and there's my tale.
Fashion and rank all praised the professor:
Ay! and I've had my smile from the Queen:
Bravo, Jerry! she meant: God bless her!
Ain't this a sermon on that scene?

VII

I've studied men from my topsy-turvy
Close, and, I reckon, rather true.
Some are fine fellows: some, right scurvy:
Most, a dash between the two.
But it's a woman, old girl, that makes me
Think more kindly of the race:
And it's a woman, old girl, that shakes me
When the Great Juggler I must face.

VIII

We two were married, due and legal:
Honest we've lived since we've been one.
Lord! I could then jump like an eagle:
You danced bright as a bit o' the sun.
Birds in a May-bush we were! right merry!
All night we kiss'd, we juggled all day.
Joy was the heart of Juggling Jerry!
Now from his old girl he's juggled away.

IX

It's past parsons to console us:
No, nor no doctor fetch for me:
I can die without my bolus;
Two of a trade, lass, never agree!
Parson and Doctor!—don't they love rarely
Fighting the devil in other men's fields!
Stand up yourself and match him fairly:
Then see how the rascal yields!

X

I, lass, have lived no gipsy, flaunting
Finery while his poor helpmate grubs:
Coin I've stored, and you won't be wanting:
You shan't beg from the troughs and tubs.
Nobly you've stuck to me, though in his kitchen

Many a Marquis would hail you Cook!
Palaces you could have ruled and grown rich in,
But your old Jerry you never forsook.

XI

Hand up the chirper! ripe ale winks in it;
Let's have comfort and be at peace.
Once a stout draught made me light as a linnet.
Cheer up! the Lord must have his lease.
May be—for none see in that black hollow— .
It's just a place where we're held in pawn,
And, when the Great Juggler makes as to swallow,
It's just the sword-trick—I ain't quite gone!

XII

Yonder came smells of the gorse, so nutty,
Gold-like and warm: it's the prime of May.
Better than mortar, brick and putty,
Is God's house on a blowing day.
Lean me more up the mound; now I feel it:
All the old heath-smells: Ain't it strange?
There's the world laughing, as if to conceal it,
But He's by us, juggling the change.

XIII

I mind it well, by the sea-beach lying,
Once—it's long gone—when two gulls we beheld,
Which, as the moon got up, were flying
Down a big wave that sparked and swelled.
Crack, went a gun: one fell: the second
Wheeled round him twice, and was off for new luck:
There in the dark her white wing beckon'd:—
Drop me a kiss—I'm the bird dead-struck!

PHOEBUS WITH ADMETUS

(1880)

I

When by Zeus relenting the mandate was revoked,
Sentencing to exile the bright Sun-God,
Mindful were the ploughmen of who the steer had yoked,
Who: and what a track showed the upturned sod!
Mindful were the shepherds as now the noon severe
Bent a burning eyebrow to brown eve-tide,
How the rustic flute drew the silver to the sphere,
Sister of his own, till her rays fell wide.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

II

Chirping none the scarlet cicalas crouched in ranks:
Slack the thistle-head piled its down-silk grey:
Scarce the stony lizard sucked hollows in his flanks:
Thick on spots of umbrage our drowsed flocks lay.
Sudden bowed the chestnuts beneath a wind unheard,
Lengthened ran the grasses, the sky grew slate:
Then amid a swift flight of winged seed white as curd,
Clear of limb a Youth smote the master's gate.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

III

Water, first of singers, o'er rocky mount and mead,
First of early singers, the sun-loved rill,
Sang of him, and flooded the ripples on the reed,
Seeking whom to waken and what ear fill.
Water, sweetest soother to kiss a wound and cool,
Sweetest and divinest, the sky-born brook,
Chuckled, with a whimper, and made a mirror-pool
Round the guest we welcomed, the strange hand shook.
God! of whom music

And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

IV

Many swarms of wild bees descended on our fields:
Stately stood the wheatstalk with head bent high:
Big of heart we labored at storing mighty yields,
Wool and corn, and clusters to make men cry!
Hand-like rushed the vintage: we strung the bellied skins
Plump, and at the sealing the Youth's voice rose:
Maidens clung in circle, on little fists their chins;
Gentle beasties through pushed a cold long nose.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

V

Foot to fire in snowtime we trimmed the slender shaft:
Often down the pit spied the lean wolf's teeth
Grin against his will, trapped by master-strokes of craft;
Helpless in his froth-wrath as green logs seethe!
Safe the tender lambs tugged the teats, and winter sped
Whirled before the crocus, the year's new gold.
Hung the hooky beak up aloft the arrow-head
Reddened through his feathers for our dear fold.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VI

Tales we drank of giants at war with Gods above:
Rocks were they to look on, and earth climbed air!
Tales of search for simples, and those who sought of love
Ease because the creature was all too fair.
Pleasant ran our thinking that while our work was good,
Sure as fruits for sweat would the praise come fast.
He that wrestled stoutest and tamed the billow-brood
Danced in rings with girls, like a sail-flapped mast.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VII

Lo, the herb of healing, when once the herb is known,
Shines in shady woods bright as new-sprung flame.
Ere the string was tightened we heard the mellow tone,
After he had taught how the sweet sounds came.
Stretched about his feet, labor done, 'twas as you see
Red pomegranates tumble and burst hard rind.
So began contention to give delight and be
Excellent in things aimed to make life kind.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VIII

You with shelly horns, rams! and promontory goats,
You whose browsing beards dip in coldest dew!
Bulls, that walk the pastures in kingly-flashing coats!
Laurel, ivy, vine, wreathed for feasts not few!
You that build the shade-roof, and you that court the rays,
You that leap besprinkling the rock stream-rent:
He has been our fellow, the morning of our days;
Us he chose for housemates, and this way went.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

THE LARK ASCENDING

(1881)

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
All intervolved and spreading wide,
Like water-dimples down a tide
Where ripple ripple overcurls
And eddy into eddy whirls;
A press of hurried notes that run
So fleet they scarce are more than one,
Yet changingly the trills repeat
And linger ringing while they fleet,
Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear
To her beyond the handmaid ear,
Who sits beside our inner springs,
Too often dry for this he brings,
Which seems the very jet of earth
At sight of sun, her music's mirth,
As up he wings the spiral stair,
A song of light, and pierces air
With fountain ardor, fountain play,
To reach the shining tops of day,
And drink in everything discerned
An ecstasy to music turned,
Impelled by what his happy bill
Disperses; drinking, showering still,
Unthinking save that he may give
His voice the outlet, there to live
Renewed in endless notes of glee,
So thirsty of his voice is he,
For all to hear and all to know
That he is joy, awake, aglow,
The tumult of the heart to hear
Through pureness filtered crystal-clear,
And know the pleasure sprinkled bright
By simple singing of delight,
Shrill, irreflective, unrestrained,
Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustained
Without a break, without a fall,
Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,
Perennial, quavering up the chord
Like myriad dews of sunny sward
That trembling into fulness shine,
And sparkle dropping argentine;
Such wooing as the ear receives
From zephyr caught in choric leaves
Of aspens when their chattering net
Is flushed to white with shivers wet;
And such the water-spirit's chime
On mountain heights in morning's prime,
Too freshly sweet to seem excess,
Too animate to need a stress;
But wider over many heads
The starry voice ascending spreads,
Awakening, as it waxes thin,
The best in us to him akin;
And every face to watch him raised,
Puts on the light of children praised,
So rich our human pleasure ripes
When sweetness on sincereness pipes,
Though nought be promised from the seas,
But only a soft-ruffling breeze
Sweep glittering on a still content,
Serenity in ravishment.
For singing till his heaven fills,
'T is love of earth that he instils,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup,
And he the wine which overflows
To lift us with him as he goes:
The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine
He is, the hills, the human line,
The meadows green, the fallows brown,
The dreams of labor in the town;
He sings the sap, the quickened veins;
The wedding song of sun and rains
He is, the dance of children, thanks
Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,
And eye of violets while they breathe;
All these the circling song will wreathe,
And you shall hear the herb and tree,
The better heart of men shall see,
Shall feel celestially, as long
As you crave nothing save the song.
Was never voice of ours could say
Our inmost in the sweetest way,
Like yonder voice aloft, and link
All hearers in the song they drink.
Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,
Our passion is too full in flood,
We want the key of his wild note
Of truthful in a tuneful throat,
The song seraphically free
Of taint of personality,
So pure that it salutes the suns
The voice of one for millions,
In whom the millions rejoice
For giving their one spirit voice.
Yet men have we, whom we revere,
Now names, and men still housing here,
Whose lives, by many a battle-dint
Defaced, and grinding wheels on flint,
Yield substance, though they sing not, sweet
For song our highest heaven to greet:
Whom heavenly singing gives us new,
Enspheres them brilliant in our blue,
From firmest base to farthest leap,
Because their love of Earth is deep,
And they are warriors in accord
With life to serve, and pass reward,
So touching purest and so heard

In the brain's reflex of yon bird:
Wherefore their soul in me, or mine,
Through self-forgetfulness divine,
In them, that song aloft maintains,
To fill the sky and thrill the plains
With showerings drawn from human stores,
As he to silence nearer soars,
Extends the world at wings and dome,
More spacious making more our home,
Till lost on his aërial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.

MELAMPUS

(1883)

With love exceeding a simple love of the things
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck;
Or change their perch on a beat of quivering wings
From branch to branch, only restful to pipe and peck;
Or, bristled, curl at a touch their snouts in a ball;
Or cast their web between bramble and thorny hook;
The good physician Melampus, loving them all,
Among them walked, as a scholar who reads a book.

For him the woods were a home and gave him the key
Of knowledge, thirst for their treasures in herbs and flowers,
The secrets held by the creatures nearer than we
To earth he sought, and the link of their life with ours:
And where alike we are, unlike where, and the veined
Division, veined parallel, of a blood that flows
In them, in us, from the source by man unattained
Save marks he well what the mystical woods disclose.

And this he deemed might be boon of love to a breast
Embracing tenderly each little motive shape,
The prone, the flitting, who seek their food whither best
Their wits direct, whither best from their foes escape:
For closer drawn to our mother's natural milk,
As babes they learn where her motherly help is great:
They know the juice for the honey, juice for the silk,
And need they medical antidotes find them straight.

Of earth and sun they are wise, they nourish their broods,
Weave, build, hive, burrow and battle, take joy and pain
Like swimmers varying billows: never in woods
Runs white insanity fleeing itself: all sane
The woods revolve: as the tree its shadowing limns
To some resemblance in motion, the rooted life
Restrains disorder: you hear the primitive hymns
Of earth in woods issue wild of the web of strife.

Now sleeping once on a day of marvellous fire,
A brood of snakes he had cherished in grave regret
That death his people had dealt their dam and their sire,
Through savage dread of them, crept to his neck, and set
Their tongues to lick him: the swift affectionate tongue
Of each ran licking the slumberer: then his ears
A forked red tongue tickled shrewdly: sudden upsprung,
He heard a voice piping: Ay, for he has no fears!

A bird said that, in the notes of birds, and the speech
Of men, it seemed: and another renewed: He moves
To learn and not to pursue, he gathers to teach;
He feeds his young as do we, and as we love loves.
No fears have I of a man who goes with his head
To earth, chance looking aloft at us, kind of hand:

I feel to him as to earth of whom we are fed;
I pipe him much for his good could he understand.

Melampus touched at his ears, laid finger on wrist:
He was not dreaming, he sensibly felt and heard.
Above, through leaves, where the tree-twigs thick intertwist,
He spied the birds and the bill of the speaking bird.
His cushion mosses in shades of various green,
The lumped, the antlered, he pressed, while the sunny snake
Slipped under: draughts he had drunk of clear Hippocrene,
It seemed, and sat with a gift of the Gods awake.

Divinely thrilled was the man, exultingly full,
As quick well-waters that come of the heart of earth,
Ere yet they dart in a brook are one bubble-pool
To light and sound, wedding both at the leap of birth.
The soul of light vivid shone, a stream within stream;
The soul of sound from a musical shell outflew;
Where others hear but a hum and see but a beam,
The tongue and eye of the fountain of life he knew.

He knew the Hours: they were round him, laden with seed
Of hours bestrewn upon vapor, and one by one
They winged as ripened in fruit the burden decreed
For each to scatter; they flushed like the buds in sun,
Bequeathing seed to successive similar rings,
Their sisters, bearers to men of what men have earned:
He knew them, talked with the yet unreddened; the stings,
The sweets, they warmed at their bosoms divined, discerned.

Not unsolicited, sought by diligent feet,
By riddling fingers expanded, oft watched in growth
With brooding deep as the noon-ray's quickening wheat,
Ere touch'd the pendulous flower of the plants of sloth,
The plants of rigidness, answered question and squeeze,
Revealing wherefore it bloomed uninviting, bent,
Yet making harmony breathe of life and disease,
The deeper chord of a wonderful instrument.

So passed he luminous-eyed for earth and the fates
We arm to bruise or caress us: his ears were charged
With tones of love in a whirl of voluble hates,
With music wrought of distraction his ear enlarged.
Celestial-shining, though mortal, singer, though mute,
He drew the Master of harmonies, voiced or stilled,
To seek him; heard at the silent medicine-root
A song, beheld in fulfilment the unfulfilled.

Him Phœbus, lending to darkness color and form
Of light's excess, many lessons and counsels gave;
Showed Wisdom lord of the human intricate swarm,
And whence prophetic it looks on the hives that rave,
And how acquired, of the zeal of love to acquire,
And where it stands, in the centre of life a sphere;
And Measure, mood of the lyre, the rapturous lyre,
He said was Wisdom, and struck him the notes to hear.

Sweet, sweet: 't was glory of vision, honey, the breeze
In heat, the run of the river on root and stone,
All senses joined, as the sister Pierides
Are one, uplifting their chorus, the Nine, his own.
In stately order, evolved of sound into sight,
From sight to sound intershifting, the man descried

The growths of earth, his adored, like day out of night,
Ascend in song, seeing nature and song allied.

And there vitality, there, there solely in song,
Resides, where earth and her uses to men, their needs,
Their forceful cravings, the theme are: there is it strong,
The Master said: and the studious eye that reads,
(Yea, even as earth to the crown of Gods on the mount),
In links divine with the lyrical tongue is bound.
Pursue thy craft: it is music drawn of a fount
To spring perennial; well-spring is common ground.

Melampus dwelt among men: physician and sage,
He served them, loving them, healing them; sick or maimed
Or them that frenzied in some delirious rage
Outran the measure, his juice of the woods reclaimed.
He played on men, as his master, Phœbus, on strings
Melodious: as the God did he drive and check,
Through love exceeding a simple love of the things
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck.

LOVE IN THE VALLEY

(1878)

Under yonder beech-tree single on the green-sward,
Couched with her arms behind her golden head,
Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,
Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.
Had I the heart to slide an arm beneath her,
Press her parting lips as her waist I gather slow,
Waking in amazement she could not but embrace me:
Then would she hold me and never let me go?

. . . . . .

Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the swallow,
Swift as the swallow along the river's light
Circleting the surface to meet his mirrored winglets,
Fleeter she seems in her stay than in her flight.
Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the pine-tops,
Wayward as the swallow overhead at set of sun,
She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,
Hard, but O the glory of the winning were she won!

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,
Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
More love should I have, and much less care.
When her mother tends her before the lighted mirror,
Loosening her laces, combing down her curls,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
I should miss but one for many boys and girls.

. . . . . .

Heartless she is as the shadow in the meadows
Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy noon.
No, she is athirst and drinking up her wonder:
Earth to her is young as the slip of the new moon.
Deals she an unkindness, 't is but her rapid measure,
Even as in a dance; and her smile can heal no less:
Like the swinging May-cloud that pelts the flowers with hailstones
Off a sunny border, she was made to bruise and bless.

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.
Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried,
Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown evejar.
Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting:
So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.
Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,
Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

. . . . . .

Stepping down the hill with her fair companions,
Arm in arm, all against the raying West,
Boldly she sings, to the merry tune she marches,
Brave is her shape, and sweeter unpossessed.
Sweeter, for she is what my heart first awaking
Whispered the world was; morning light is she.
Love that so desires would fain keep her changeless;
Fain would fling the net, and fain have her free.

Happy happy time, when the white star hovers
Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy dew,
Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,
Threading it with color, like yewberries the yew.
Thicker crowd the shades as the grave East deepens
Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.
Maiden still the morn is; and strange she is, and secret;
Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.

. . . . . .

Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and lighting
Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills along,
Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant laughter
Chill as a dull face frowning on a song.
Ay, but shows the South-West a ripple-feathered bosom
Blown to silver while the clouds are shaken and ascend
Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream, there comes a sunset
Rich, deep like love in beauty without end.

When at dawn she sighs, and like an infant to the window
Turns grave eyes craving light, released from dreams,
Beautiful she looks, like a white water-lily
Bursting out of bud in havens of the streams.
When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle
In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,
Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily
Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

. . . . . .

Mother of the dews, dark eye-lashed twilight,
Low-lidded twilight, o'er the valley's brim,
Rounding on thy breast sings the dew-delighted skylark,
Clear as though the dewdrops had their voice in him.
Hidden where the rose-flush drinks the rayless planet,
Fountain-full he pours the spraying fountain-showers.
Let me hear her laughter, I would have her ever
Cool as dew in twilight, the lark above the flowers.

All the girls are out with their baskets for the primrose;
Up lanes, woods through, they troop in joyful bands.
My sweet leads: she knows not why, but now she loiters,
Eyes the bent anemones, and hangs her hands.
Such a look will tell that the violets are peeping,

Coming the rose: and unaware a cry
Springs in her bosom for odors and for color,
Covert and the nightingale; she knows not why.

. . . . . .

Kerchiefed head and chin she darts between her tulips,
Streaming like a willow grey in arrowy rain:
Some bend beaten cheek to gravel, and their angel
She will be; she lifts them, and on she speeds again.
Black the driving raincloud breasts the iron gateway:
She is forth to cheer a neighbor lacking mirth.
So when sky and grass met rolling dumb for thunder
Saw I once a white dove, sole light of earth.

Prim little scholars are the flowers of her garden,
Trained to stand in rows, and asking if they please.
I might love them well but for loving more the wild ones:
O my wild ones! they tell me more than these.
You, my wild one, you tell of honeyed field-rose,
Violet, blushing eglantine in life; and even as they,
They by the wayside are earnest of your goodness,
You are of life's, on the banks that line the way.

. . . . . .

Peering at her chamber the white crowns the red rose,
Jasmine winds the porch with stars two and three.
Parted is the window; she sleeps; the starry jasmine
Breathes a falling breath that carries thoughts of me.
Sweeter unpossessed, have I said of her my sweetest?
Not while she sleeps: while she sleeps the jasmine breathes,
Luring her to love; she sleeps; the starry jasmine
Bears me to her pillow under white rose-wreaths.

Yellow with birdfoot-trefoil are the grass-glades;
Yellow with cinquefoil of the dew-grey leaf;
Yellow with stonecrop; the moss-mounds are yellow;
Blue-necked the wheat sways, yellowing to the sheaf.
Green-yellow bursts from the copse the laughing yaffle;
Sharp as a sickle is the edge of shade and shine:
Earth in her heart laughs looking at the heavens,
Thinking of the harvest: I look and think of mine.

. . . . . .

This I may know: her dressing and undressing
Such a change of light shows as when the skies in sport
Shift from cloud to moonlight; or edging over thunder
Slips a ray of sun; or sweeping into port
White sails furl; or on the ocean borders
White sails lean along the waves leaping green.
Visions of her shower before me, but from eyesight
Guarded she would be like the sun were she seen.

Front door and back of the mossed old farmhouse
Open with the morn, and in a breezy link
Freshly sparkles garden to stripe-shadowed orchard,
Green across a rill where on sand the minnows wink.
Busy in the grass the early sun of summer
Swarms, and the blackbird's mellow fluting notes
Call my darling up with round and roguish challenge:
Quaintest, richest carol of all the singing throats!

. . . . . .

Cool was the woodside; cool as her white dairy
Keeping sweet the cream-pan; and there the boys from school,
Cricketing below, rushed brown and red with sunshine;
O the dark translucence of the deep-eyed cool!
Spying from the farm, herself she fetched a pitcher
Full of milk, and tilted for each in turn the beak.
Then a little fellow, mouth up and on tip-toe,
Said, "I will kiss you"; she laughed and leaned her cheek.

Doves of the fir-wood walling high our red roof
Through the long noon coo, crooning through the coo.
Loose droop the leaves, and down the sleepy roadway
Sometimes pipes a chaffinch; loose droops the blue.
Cows flap a slow tail knee-deep in the river,
Breathless, given up to sun and gnat and fly.
Nowhere is she seen; and if I see her nowhere,
Lightning may come, straight rains and tiger sky.

. . . . . .

O the golden sheaf, the rustling treasure-armful!
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!
O the treasure-tresses one another over
Nodding! O the girdle slack about the waist!
Slain are the poppies that shot their random scarlet
Quick amid the wheatears: wound about the waist,
Gathered, see these brides of Earth one blush of ripeness!
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!

Large and smoky red the sun's cold disk drops,
Clipped by naked hills, on violet shaded snow:
Eastward large and still lights up a bower of moonrise,
Whence at her leisure steps the moon aglow.
Nightlong on black print-branches our beech-tree
Gazes in this whiteness; nightlong could I.
Here may life on death or death on life be painted.
Let me clasp her soul to know she cannot die!

. . . . . .

Gossips count her faults: they scour a narrow chamber
Where there is no window, read not heaven or her.
"When she was a tiny," one aged woman quavers,
Plucks at my heart and leads me by the ear.
Faults she had once as she learnt to run and tumbled:
Faults of feature some see, beauty not complete.
Yet, good gossips, beauty that makes holy
Earth and air, may have faults from head to feet.

Hither she comes; she comes to me; she lingers,
Deepens her brown eyebrows, while in new surprise
High rise the lashes in wonder of a stranger;
Yet am I the light and living of her eyes.
Something friends have told her fills her heart to brimming,
Nets her in her blushes, and wounds her, and tames.—
Sure of her haven, O like a dove alighting,
Arms up, she dropped: our souls were in our names.

. . . . . .

Soon will she lie like a white frost sunrise.
Yellow oats and brown wheat, barley pale as rye,
Long since your sheaves have yielded to the thresher,
Felt the girdle loosened, seen the tresses fly.
Soon will she lie like a blood-red sunset.
Swift with the to-morrow, green-winged Spring!

Sing from the South-West, bring her back the truants,
Nightingale and swallow, song and dipping wing.

Soft new beech-leaves, up to beamy April
Spreading bough on bough a primrose mountain, you
Lucid in the moon, raise lilies to the sky-fields,
Youngest green transfused in silver shining through:
Fairer than the lily, than the wild white cherry:
Fair as in image my seraph love appears
Borne to me by dreams when dawn is at my eyelids:
Fair as in the flesh she swims to me on tears.

. . . . . .

Could I find a place to be alone with heaven,
I would speak my heart out: heaven is my need.
Every woodland tree is flushing like the dogwood,
Flashing like the whitebeam, swaying like the reed.
Flushing like the dogwood crimson in October;
Streaming like the flag-reed South-West blown;
Flashing as in gusts the sudden-lighted whitebeam:
All seem to know what is for heaven alone.

LUCIFER IN STARLIGHT

(1883)

On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose;
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,
Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose.
Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.
And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.

OUTER AND INNER

(1888)

I

From twig to twig the spider weaves
At noon his webbing fine.
So near to mute the zephyrs flute
That only leaflets dance.
The sun draws out of hazel leaves
A smell of woodland wine.
I wake a swarm to sudden storm
At any step's advance.

II

Along my path is bugloss blue,
The star with fruit in moss;
The foxgloves drop from throat to top
A daily lesser bell.
The blackest shadow, nurse of dew,
Has orange skeins across;
And keenly red is one thin thread
That flashing seems to swell.

III

My world I note ere fancy comes,
Minutest hushed observe:
What busy bits of motioned wits
Through antlered mosswork strive.
But now so low the stillness hums,
My springs of seeing swerve,
For half a wink to thrill and think
The woods with nymphs alive.

IV

I neighbor the invisible
So close that my consent
Is only asked for spirits masked

To leap from trees and flowers.
And this because with them I dwell
In thought, while calmly bent
To read the lines dear Earth designs
Shall speak her life on ours.

V

Accept, she says; it is not hard
In woods; but she in towns
Repeats, accept; and have we wept,
And have we quailed with fears,
Or shrunk with horrors, sure reward
We have whom knowledge crowns;
Who see in mould the rose unfold,
The soul through blood and tears.

NATURE AND LIFE

(1888)

I

Leave the uproar: at a leap
Thou shalt strike a woodland path,
Enter silence, not of sleep,
Under shadows, not of wrath;
Breath which is the spirit's bath,
In the old Beginnings find,
And endow them with a mind,
Seed for seedling, swathe for swathe.
That gives Nature to us, this
Give we her, and so we kiss.

II

Fruitful is it so: but hear
How within the shell thou art,
Music sounds; nor other near
Can to such a tremor start.
Of the waves our life is part;
They our running harvests bear:
Back to them for manful air,
Laden with the woodland's heart!
That gives Battle to us, this
Give we it, and good the kiss.

DIRGE IN WOODS

(1870)

A wind sways the pines,
And below
Not a breath of wild air;
Still as the mosses that glow
On the flooring and over the lines
Of the roots here and there.
The pine-tree drops its dead;
They are quiet, as under the sea.
Overhead, overhead
Rushes life in a race,
As the clouds the clouds chase;
And we go,
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
Even we,
Even so.

MEDITATION UNDER STARS

(1888)

What links are ours with orbs that are
So resolutely far:
The solitary asks, and they
Give radiance as from a shield:
Still at the death of day,
The seen, the unrevealed.
Implacable they shine
To us who would of Life obtain
An answer for the life we strain,
To nourish with one sign.
Nor can imagination throw
The penetrative shaft: we pass
The breath of thought, who would divine
If haply they may grow
As Earth; have our desire to know;
If life comes there to grain from grass,
And flowers like ours of toil and pain;
Has passion to beat bar,
Win space from cleaving brain;
The mystic link attain,
Whereby star holds on star.

Those visible immortals beam
Allurement to the dream:
Ireful at human hungers brook
No question in the look.
For ever virgin to our sense,
Remote they wane to gaze intense:
Prolong it, and in ruthlessness they smite
The beating heart behind the ball of sight:
Till we conceive their heavens hoar,
Those lights they raise but sparkles frore,
And Earth, our blood-warm Earth, a shuddering prey
To that frigidity of brainless ray.
Yet space is given for breath of thought
Beyond our bounds when musing: more
When to that musing love is brought,
And love is asked of love's wherefore.
'T is Earth's, her gift; else have we nought:

Her gift, her secret, here our tie.
And not with her and yonder sky?
Bethink you: were it Earth alone
Breeds love, would not her region be
The sole delight and throne
Of generous Deity?

To deeper than this ball of sight
Appeal the lustrous people of the night.
Fronting yon shoreless, sown with fiery sails,
It is our ravenous that quails,
Flesh by its craven thirsts and fears distraught.
The spirit leaps alight,
Doubts not in them is he,
The binder of his sheaves, the same, the right:
Of magnitude to magnitude is wrought,
To feel it large of the great life they hold:
In them to come, or vaster intervolved,
The issues known in us, our unsolved solved:
That there with toil Life climbs the self-same Tree,
Whose roots enrichment have from ripeness dropped.
So may we read and little find them cold:
Let it but be the lord of Mind to guide
Our eyes; no branch of Reason's growing lopped;
Nor dreaming on a dream; but fortified
By day to penetrate black midnight; see,
Hear, feel, outside the senses; even that we,
The specks of dust upon a mound of mould,
We who reflect those rays, though low our place,
To them are lastingly allied.

So may we read, and little find them cold:
Not frosty lamps illumining dead space,
Not distant aliens, not senseless Powers.
The fire is in them whereof we are born;
The music of their motion may be ours.
Spirit shall deem them beckoning Earth and voiced
Sisterly to her, in her beams rejoiced.
Of love, the grand impulsion, we behold
The love that lends her grace
Among the starry fold.
Then at new flood of customary morn,
Look at her through her showers,
Her mists, her streaming gold,
A wonder edges the familiar face:
She wears no more that robe of printed hours;
Half strange seems Earth, and sweeter than her flowers.

THE VITAL CHOICE

(1901)

I

Or shall we run with Artemis
Or yield the breast to Aphrodite?
Both are mighty;
Both give bliss;
Each can torture if derided;
Each claims worship undivided,
In her wake would have us wallow.

II

Youth must offer on bent knees
Homage unto one or other;
Earth, the mother,
This decrees;
And unto the pallid Scyther,
Either points us shun we either,
Shun or too devoutly follow.

WITH THE HUNTRESS

(1901)

Through the water-eye of night,
Midway between eve and dawn,
See the chase, the rout, the flight
In deep forest; oread, faun,
Goat-foot, antlers laid on neck;
Ravenous all the line for speed.
See yon wavy sparkle beck
Sign of the Virgin Lady's lead.
Down her course a serpent star
Coils and shatters at her heels;
Peals the horn exulting, peals
Plaintive, is it near or far.
Huntress, arrowy to pursue,
In and out of woody glen,
Under cliffs that tear the blue,
Over torrent, over fen,
She and forest, where she skims
Feathery, darken and relume:
Those are her white-lightning limbs
Cleaving loads of leafy gloom.
Mountains hear her and call back,
Shrewd with night: a frosty wail
Distant: her the emerald vale
Folds, and wonders in her track.

Now her retinue is lean,
Many rearward; streams the chase
Eager forth of covert; seen
One hot tide the rapturous race.
Quiver-charged and crescent-crowned,
Up on a flash the lighted mound
Leaps she, bow to shoulder, shaft
Strung to barb with archer's craft,
Legs like plaited lyre-chords, feet
Songs to see, past pitch of sweet.
Fearful swiftness they outrun,
Shaggy wildness, grey or dun,
Challenge, charge of tusks elude:
Theirs the dance to tame the rude;
Beast, and beast in manhood tame,
Follow we their silver flame.
Pride of flesh from bondage free,
Reaping vigor of its waste,
Marks her servitors, and she
Sanctifies the unembraced.
Nought of perilous she recks;
Valor clothes her open breast;
Sweet beyond the thrill of sex;
Hallowed by the sex confessed.
Huntress arrowy to pursue,
Colder she than sunless dew,
She, that breath of upper air;
Ay, but never lyrist sang,
Draught of Bacchus never sprang
Blood the bliss of Gods to share,
High o'er sweep of eagle wings,
Like the run with her, when rings
Clear her rally, and her dart,
In the forest's cavern heart,
Tells of her victorious aim.
Then is pause and chatter, cheer,
Laughter at some satyr lame,
Looks upon the fallen deer,
Measuring his noble crest;
Here a favorite in her train,
Foremost mid her nymphs, caressed;
All applauded. Shall she reign
Worshipped? O to be with her there!
She, that breath of nimble air,
Lifts the breast to giant power.
Maid and man, and man and maid,
Who each other would devour
Elsewhere, by the chase betrayed,
There are comrades, led by her,
Maid-preserver, man-maker.

THOMAS EDWARD BROWN (1830–1897)

BRADDAN VICARAGE

(1893)

I wonder if in that far isle,
Some child is growing now, like me
When I was child: care-pricked, yet healed the while
With balm of rock and sea.

I wonder if the purple ring
That rises on a belt of blue
Provokes the little bashful thing
To guess what may ensue,
When he has pierced the screen, and holds the further clue.

I wonder if beyond the verge
He dim conjectures England's coast:
The land of Edwards and of Henries, scourge
Of insolent foemen, at the most
Faint caught where Cumbria looms a geographic ghost.

I wonder if to him the sycamore
Is full of green and tender light;
If the gnarled ash stands stunted at the door,
By salt sea-blast defrauded of its right;
If budding larches feed the hunger of his sight.

I wonder if to him the dewy globes
Like mercury nestle in the caper leaf;
If, when the white narcissus dons its robes,
It soothes his childish grief;
If silver plates the birch, gold rustles in the sheaf.

I wonder if to him the heath-clad mountain
With crimson pigment fills the sensuous cells;
If like full bubbles from an emerald fountain
Gorse-bloom luxuriant wells;
If God with trenchant forms the insolent lushness quells.

I wonder if the hills are long and lonely
That North from South divide;

I wonder if he thinks that it is only
The hither slope where men abide,
Unto all mortal homes refused the other side.

I wonder if some day he, chance-conducted,
Attains the vantage of the utmost height,
And, by his own discovery instructed,
Sees grassy plain and cottage white,
Each human sign and pledge that feeds him with delight.

At eventide, when lads with lasses dally,
And milking Pei sits singing at the pail,
I wonder if he hears along the valley
The wind's sad sough, half credulous of the tale
How from Slieu-whallian moans the murdered witches' wail.

I wonder if to him "the Boat," descending
From the proud East, his spirit fills
With a strange joy, adventurous ardor lending
To the mute soul that thrills
As booms the herald gun, and westward wakes the hills.

I wonder if he loves that Captain bold
Who has the horny hand,
Who swears the mighty oath, who well can hold,
Half-drunk, serene command,
And guide his straining bark to refuge of the land.

I wonder if he thinks the world has aught
Of strong, or nobly wise,
Like him by whom the invisible land is caught
With instinct true, nor storms, nor midnight skies
Avert the settled aim, or daunt the keen emprise.

I wonder if he deems the English men
A higher type beyond his reach,
Imperial blood, by Heaven ordained with pen
And sword the populous world to teach;
If awed he hears the tones as of an alien speech;

Or, older grown, suspects a braggart race,
Ignores phlegmatic claim
Of privileged assumption, holding base
Their technic skill and aim,
And all the prosperous fraud that binds their social frame.

Young rebel! how he pants, who knows not what
He hates, yet hates: all one to him
If Guelph, or Buonaparte, or sans-culotte,
If Strafford or if Pym
Usurp the clumsy helm—if England sink or swim!

Ah! crude, undisciplined, when thou shalt know
What good is in this England, still of joys
The chiefest count it thou wast nurtured so
That thou may'st keep the larger equipoise,
And stand outside these nations and their noise.

ST. BEE'S HEAD

(*1868*–1893)

I have seen cliffs that met the ocean foe
As a black bison, with his crouching front
And neck back-coiled, awaits the yelping hunt,
That reck not of his horns protruding low.

And others I have seen with calm disdain
O'erlook the immediate strife, and gaze afar:
Eternity was in that gaze; the jar
Of temporal broil assailed not its domain.

Some cliffs are full of pity: in the sweep
Of their bluff brows a kindly tolerance waits,
And smiles upon the petulant sea, that rates,
And fumes, and scolds against the patient steep.

And some are joyous with a hearty joy,
And in mock-earnest wage the busy fight:

So may you see a giant with delight
Parrying the buffets of a saucy boy!

Remonstrant others stand—a wild surprise
Glares from their crests against the insolent throng;
Half frightened, half indignant at the wrong,
They look appealing to those heedless skies.

And other some are of a sleepy mood,
Who care not if the tempest does its worst:
What is't to them if bounding billows burst,
Or winds assail them with their jeerings rude?

But like not unto any one of these
Is that tall crag, that northward guards the bay,
And stands, a watchful sentry, night and day
Above the pleasant downs of old St. Bee's.

Straight-levelled as the bayonet's dread array,
His shelves abide the charge. Come one, come all!
The blustering surges at his feet shall fall
And writhe and sob their puny lives away!

AN OXFORD IDYLL

(*1875–1893*)

Ah little mill, you're rumbling still,
Ah sunset flecked with gold!
Ah deepening tinge, ah purple fringe
Of lilac as of old!
Ah hawthorn hedge, ah light-won pledge
Of kisses warm and plenty,
When she was true, and twenty-two,
And I was two-and-twenty.
I don't know how she broke her vow—
She said that I was "horty";
And there's the mill a goin' still,
And I am five-and-forty.
And sooth to tell, 'twas just as well,
Her aitches were uncertain;
Her ways though nice, not point-device;
Her father liked his "Burton."
But there's a place you cannot trace,
So spare the fond endeavor—
A cloudless sky, where Kate and I
Are twenty-two for ever.

JESSIE

(*1868–1893*)

When Jessie comes with her soft breast,
And yields the golden keys,
Then is it as if God caressed
Twin babes upon His knees—
Twin babes that, each to other pressed,
Just feel the Father's arms, wherewith they both are blessed.

But when I think if we must part,
And all this personal dream be fled—
O, then my heart! O, then my useless heart!
Would God that thou wert dead—
A clod insensible to joys or ills—
A stone remote in some bleak gully of the hills!

DORA

(1893)

She knelt upon her brother's grave,
My little girl of six years old—
He used to be so good and brave,
The sweetest lamb of all our fold;
He used to shout, he used to sing,
Of all our tribe the little king—
And so unto the turf her ear she laid,
To hark if still in that dark place he played.
No sound! no sound!
Death's silence was profound;
And horror crept
Into her aching heart, and Dora wept.
If this is as it ought to be,
My God, I leave it unto Thee.

MY GARDEN

(*1875–1893*)

A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot—
The veriest school
Of peace; and yet the fool
Contends that God is not—
Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign;
'Tis very sure God walks in mine.

EPISTOLA AD DAKYNS

(*1869*–1893)

Dakyns, when I am dead,
Three places must by you be visited,
Three places excellent,
Where you may ponder what I meant
And then pass on—
Three places you must visit when I'm gone.
Yes, *meant*, not *did*, old friend!
For neither you nor I shall see the end,
And do the thing we wanted:
Natheless three places will be haunted
By what of me
The earth and air
Shall spare,
And fire and sea
Let be—
Three places only,
Three places, Dakyns.

I

The first is by the Avon's side,
Where tall rocks flank the winding tide
There come when morning's virgin kiss
Awakes from dreams the clematis,
And every thorn and briar is set
As with a diamond coronet—
There come, and pause upon the edge,
And I will lean in every ledge,
And melt in grays, and flash in whites,
And linger in a thousand lights;
And yield in bays, and urge in capes,
And fill the old familiar shapes;
And yearn in curves, and strain to meet
The pensive pressure of your feet
And you shall feel an inner sense,
A being kindred and intense;
And you shall feel a strict control,
A something drawing at your soul,
A going out, a life suspended,
A spirit with a spirit blended.
And you shall start as from a dream,
While I, withdrawing down the stream,
Drift vaporous to the ancient sea,
A wraith, a film, a memory—
Three places, Dakyns.

II

The next is where a hundred fells
Stand round the Lake like sentinels,
Where Derwent, like a sleeping beauty,
Girdled with that watchful duty,
At Skiddaw's foot securely lies,
And gives her bosom to the skies.
O, come! and I will bid the moon
All subtle harmonies attune
That live in shadows and in heights,
A mystic chorus of delights.
O, come where many an island bevels
Its strand to meet the golden levels!
O, lay your heart upon each line,
So diamond-cut and crystalline,
That seams the marble of the mere,
And smoothes all trouble, calms all fear,
With that sweet natural straightness, free
From effort or inconstancy.
O, draw your thought with all its passion
Along the melancholy fashion
Of forms accentuate with the beat
Of the great Master's rhythmic feet.
But when upon the finest verge
The sense no further flight can urge,
When the full orb of contemplation
Is stretched, a nameless tribulation
Shall sway the whole, a silent stress
Borne in upon that loveliness;
A burden as of human ills,
A human trouble in the hills;
A quickening pulse in earth and sky,
And you shall know that it is I—
Three places, Dakyns.

III

The next is where God keeps for me
A little island in the sea,
A body for my needs, that so
I may not all unclothèd go,
A vital instrument whereby
I still may commune with the sky,
When death has loosed the plaited strands,
And left me feeling for the lands.
Even now between its simple poles
It has the soul of all my souls.
But then—whatever I have been,
Whatever felt, whatever seen,
Whatever guessed, or understood,
The tones of right, the tints of good,
The loves, the hates, the hopes, the fears,
The gathered strength of all my years—
All that my life has in me wrought
Of complex essence shall be brought
And wedded to those primal forms
That have their scope in calms and storms,
Attunèd to the swells and falls
Of Nature's holy intervals.
And, old coeval use surviving,
No need shall be for any striving,
No need from point to point to press,
And swell the growing consciousness,
But in a moment I shall sit

Sphered in the very heart of it.
And every hill from me shall shoot,
And spread as from a central root,
And every crag and every spur
To me its attitude refer;
And I shall be the living heart,
And I shall live in every part,
With elemental cares engrossed,
And all the passion of the coast.
Come then, true Dakyns, be the test
Most meet to make me manifest!
Come, and immediate recognise
To all your moods the dumb replies.
Or stretch across a kindly void
The golden life-chords unalloyed
With thought, and instant they shall wake
The music they were made to make.
Thus shall you grow into a sense
Of islandhood, not taking thence
Some pretty surfaces and angles,
Tricking your soul, as with fine spangles
A savage studs his wampum belt,
But patient till the whole is felt,
And you become incorporate
Into an undivided state.
Then shall your body be as dead;
And you shall take to you instead
The system of the natural powers,
The heath that blooms, the cloud that lowers,
The antithesis of things that bide,
The cliff, the beach, the rock, the tide—
The lordly things, whose generous feud
Is but a fixed vicissitude.
Wherefore, O Maughold, if he come,
If Dakyns come,
Let not a voice be dumb
In any cave;
Fling up the wave
In wreaths of giddy spray;
O'er all the bay
Flame out in gorse around the "kern," [1]
And let his heart within him burn,
Until he gains the slope
Where, in the "sure and certain hope,"
Sleep the long rows:
Then let him quench the fiery gleams
In Death's gray shadow of repose,
As one who dreams
He knows not what, and yet he knows
I have her there
That was a bud so rare.
But, Bradda, if he come to you,
I charge you to be true!
Sit not all sullen by the sea,
But show that you are conscious it is he.
It is no vulgar tread
That bends the heath:
Broad be the heavens spread
Above, the sea beneath
Blue with *that* blue!
And let the whispering airs
Move in the ferns. By those strong prayers
Which rent my heart that day as lightning rends a cloud,
And rips it till it glares
To open view: by all the vows I vowed,
I charge you, and I charge you by the tears
And by the passion that I took
From you, and flung them to the vale,
And had the ultimate vision, do not fail!
Three places only—
Three places, Dakyns.

[1] Cairn.

CHALSE A KILLEY

TO CHALSE IN HEAVEN

(*1875–1893*)

So you are gone, dear Chalse!
Ah! well: it was enough—
The ways were cold, the ways were rough—
O Heaven! O home!
No more to roam—
Chalse, poor Chalse.

And now it's all so plain, dear Chalse!
So plain—
The wildered brain,
The joy, the pain—
The phantom shapes that haunted,
The half-born thoughts that daunted—
All, all is plain
Dear Chalse!
All is plain.

Yet where you're now, dear Chalse,
Have you no memory
Of land and sea,
Of vagrant liberty?
Through all your dreams
Come there no gleams
Of morning sweet and cool
On old Barrule?
Breathes there no breath,
Far o'er the hills of Death,
Of a soft wind that dallies
Among the Curragh sallies—
Shaking the perfumed gold-dust on the streams?
Chalse, poor Chalse!

Or is it all forgotten, Chalse?
A fever fit that vanished with the night—
Has God's great light
Pierced through the veiled delusions,
The errors and confusions;
And pointed to the tablet, where
In quaint and wayward character,
As of some alien clime,
His name was graven all the time?
All the time!
O Chalse! poor Chalse.

Such music as you made, dear Chalse!
With that crazed instrument
That God had given you here for use—
You will not wonder now if it did loose
Our childish laughter, being writhen and bent
From native function—was it not, sweet saint?
But when such music ceases,
'Tis God that takes to pieces
The inveterate complication,
And makes a restoration
Most subtle in its sweetness,
Most strong in its completeness,
Most constant in its meetness;
And gives the absolute tone,
And so appoints your station
Before the throne—
Chalse, poor Chalse.

And yet while you were here, dear Chalse,
You surely had more joy than sorrow:
Even from your weakness you did borrow
A strength to mock
The frowns of fortune, to decline the shock
Of rigorous circumstance,
To weave around your path a dance
Of "airy nothings," Chalse; and while your soul,
Dear Chalse! was dark,
As an o'erwanèd moon from pole to pole,
Yet had you still an arc
Forlorn, a silvery rim
Of the same light wherein the cherubim
Bathe their glad brows, and veer
On circling wings above the starry sphere—
Chalse, poor Chalse.

Yes, you had joys, dear Chalse! as when forsooth
Right valiant for the truth,
You crossed the Baldwin hills,
And at the Union Mills,
Inspired with sacred fury,
You helped good Parson Drury
To "put the *Romans* out,"
A champion brave and stout—
Ah! now, dear Chalse, of all the radiant host,
Who loves you most?
I think I know him, kneeling on his knees—
Is it Saint Francis of Assise?
Chalse, poor Chalse.

Great joy was yours, dear Chalse! when first I met you
In that old Vicarage
That shelters under Bradda: we did get you
By stratagem most sage
Of youthful mischief—got you all unweeting
Of mirthful toys—
A merry group of girls and boys,
To hold a missionary meeting;
And you did stand upon a chair,
In the best parlor there;
And dear old Parson Corrin was from home,
And I did play a tune upon a comb;
And unto us
You did pronounce a speech most marvellous,
Dear Chalse! and then you said
And *sthrooghed* [1] the head—
"If there'll be no objection,
We'll now *purseed* [2] to the collection"—
Chalse, poor Chalse!

And do you still remember, Chalse,
How at the Dhoor [3]—
Near Ramsey, *to be sure*—
I got two painters painting in the chapel
To make with me a congregation?
And you did mount the pulpit, and did grapple
With a tremendous text, and warn the nation
Of drunkenness; and in your hand
Did wave an empty bottle, so that we,
By palpable typology,
Might understand—
Dear Chalse, you never had
An audience more silent or more sad!

And have you met him, Chalse,
Whom you did long to meet?
You used to call him *dear and sweet*—

1 Stroked.
2 Proceed.
3 A well of "black water" on the Andreas Road.

Good Bishop Wilson—has he *taken you*
In hand, dear Chalse? And is he true,
And is he kind,
And do you tell him all your mind,
Dear Chalse—
All your mind?
And have you yet set up the press;
And is the type in readiness,
Founded with gems
Of living sapphire, dipped
In blood of molten rubies, diamond-tipped?
And, *with the sanction of the Governor,*
Do you, a proud compositor,
Stand forth, and *prent the Hemns?*[1]—
Chalse, poor Chalse!

THE PEEL LIFE-BOAT

(*1891*–1893)

Of Charley Cain, the cox,
And the thunder of the rocks,
And the ship *St. George*—
How he balked the sea-wolf's gorge
Of its prey—
Southward bound from Norraway;
And the fury and the din,
And the horror and the roar,
Rolling in, rolling in,
Rolling in upon the dead lee-shore!

See the Harbor-master stands,
Cries—"Have you all your hands?"
Then, as an angel springs
With God's breath upon his wings,
She went;
And the black storm robe was rent
With the shout and with the din. . . .

And the castle walls were crowned,
And no woman lay in swound,
But they stood upon the height
Straight and stiff to see the fight,
For they knew
What the pluck of men can do:
With the fury and the din. . . .

"Lay aboard her, Charley lad!"
"Lay aboard her!—Are you mad?
With the bumping and the scamper
Of all this loose deck hamper,
And the yards
Dancing round us here like cards,"
With the fury and the din. . . .

So Charley scans the rout,
Charley knows what he's about,
Keeps his distance, heaves the line—
"Pay it out there true and fine!

Not too much, men!
Take in the slack, you Dutchmen!"
With the fury and the din. . . .

Now the hauser's fast and steady,
And the traveller rigged and ready.
Says Charley—"What's the lot?"
"Twenty-four." Then like a shot—
"Twenty-three,"
Says Charley, "'s all I see"—
With the fury and the din. . . .

"Not a soul shall leave the wreck,"
Says Charley, "till on deck
You bring the man that's hurt."
So they brought him in his shirt—
O, it's fain
I am for you, Charles Cain—
With the fury and the din. . . .

And the Captain and his wife,
And a baby! Odds my life!
Such a beauty! Such a prize!
And the tears in Charley's eyes.
Arms of steel,
For the honor of old Peel
Haul away amid the din. . . .

Sing ho! the seething foam!
Sing ho! the road for home!
And the hulk they've left behind,
Like a giant stunned and blind
With the loom
And the boding of his doom—
With the fury and the din. . . .

"Here's a child! don't let it fall!"
Says Charley, "Nurse it, all!"
O the tossing of the breasts!
O the brooding of soft nests,
Taking turns,
As each maid and mother yearns
For the babe that 'scaped the din.

See the rainbow bright and broad!
Now, all men, thank ye God,
For the marvel and the token,
And the word that He hath spoken!
With Thee,
O Lord of all that be,
We have peace amid the din,
And the horror and the roar,
Rolling, in rolling in,
Rolling in upon the dead lee-shore.

CATHERINE KINRADE

(*1878*–1893)

None spake when Wilson stood before
The throne—

[1] Print the Hymns.

And He that sat thereon
Spake not; and all the presence-floor
Burnt deep with blushes, as the angels cast
Their faces downwards. Then at last,
Awe-stricken, he was 'ware
How on the emerald stair
A woman sat, divinely clothed in white,
And at her knees four cherubs bright,
That laid
Their heads within her lap. Then, trembling, he essayed
To speak:—"Christ's mother, pity me!"
Then answered she:—
"Sir, I am Catherine Kinrade."
Even so—the poor dull brain,
Drenched in unhallowed fire,
It had no vigor to restrain—
God's image trodden in the mire
Of impious wrongs—whom last he saw
Gazing with animal awe
Before his harsh tribunal, proved unchaste,
Incorrigible, woman's form defaced
To uttermost ruin by no fault of hers—
So gave her to the torturers;
And now—some vital spring adjusted,
Some faculty that rusted
Cleansed to legitimate use—
Some undeveloped action stirred, some juice
Of God's distilling dropt into the core
Of all her life—no more
In that dark grave entombed,
Her soul had bloomed
To perfect woman—swift celestial growth
That mocks our temporal sloth—
To perfect woman—woman made to honor,
With all the glory of her youth upon her.
And from her lips and from her eyes there flowed
A smile that lit all Heaven; the angels smiled;
God smiled, if that were smile beneath the state that glowed
Soft purple—and a voice:—"Be reconciled!"
So to his side the children crept,
And Catherine kissed him, and he wept.
Then said a seraph:—"Lo! he is forgiven."
And for a space again there was no voice in Heaven.

MATER DOLOROSA

(1893)

Aw, Billy, good sowl! don't cuss! don't cuss!
Ye see, these angels is grand to nuss;
And it's lek they're feedin' them on some nice air,
Or dew or the lek, that's handy there,
O Billy, look at my poor poor bress!
O Billy, see the full it is!
But . . . O my God! . . . but navar mind!
There's no doubt them sperrits is very kind—
And of coorse they're that beautiful it's lekly
The childher is takin' to them directly—
Eh, Billy, eh? . . . And . . . O my head!
Billy, Billy, come to bed! . . .
And the little things that navar knew sin—
And everything as nate as a pin:
And the lovely bells goin' ding-a-lingin'—
And of coorse we've allis heard of their singin'.
But won't he want me when he'll be wakin'?
Will they take him up when he's wantin' takin'?
I hope he'll nót be left in the dark—
He was allis used to make a wark
If a body'd lave him the smallest minute—
Dear me! the little linnet—
But I forgot—it's allis light
In yandhar place . . . All right! all right!
I forgot, ye see, . . . I'm not very well . . .
Light, was I sayin'? but who can tell?
Bad for the eyes, though . . . but a little curtain
On a string, ye know—aw certain! certain!
Let me feel your face, Billy! Jus' us two!
Aw, Billy, the sorry I am for you!
Aw 'deed it is, Billy,—very disthressin'
To lave your childher to another pessin—
But . . . all the little rooms that's theer—
And Jesus walkin' up the steer,
And tappin' lek—I see! I see!—
O Jesus Christ, have pity on me!
But He'll come, He'll come! He'll give a look
Jus' to see the care that's took—
O! there's no doubt He's very gud—
O, I think He wud, I think He wud!
But still . . . but still . . . but I don't know . . .
O Billy! I think I'd like to go—
What's that, Billy? did ye hear a cry?
O Illiam, the sweet it'd be to die!

ARTHUR WILLIAM EDGAR O'SHAUGHNESSY
(1844–1881)

SALOME

(From "THE DAUGHTER OF HERODIAS")

(1870)

Her long black hair danced round her like a snake
Allured to each charmed movement she did make;
Her voice came strangely sweet;
She sang, "O, Herod, wilt thou look on me—
Have I no beauty thy heart cares to see?"
And what her voice did sing her dancing feet
Seemed ever to repeat.

She sang, "O, Herod, wilt thou look on me?
What sweet I have, I have it all for thee;"
And through the dance and song
She freed and floated on the air her arms
Above dim veils that hid her bosom's charms:
The passion of her singing was so strong
It drew all hearts along.

Her sweet arms were unfolded on the air,
They seemed like floating flowers the most fair—
White lilies the most choice;
And in the gradual bending of her hand
There lurked a grace that no man could withstand;
Yea, none knew whether hands, or feet, or voice,
Most made his heart rejoice.

The veils fell round her like thin coiling mists
Shot through by topaz suns, and amethysts,
And rubies she had on;
And out of them her jewelled body came,
And seemed to all quite like a slender flame
That curled and glided, and that burnt and shone
Most fair to look upon.

Then she began, on that well-polished floor,
Whose stones seemed taking radiance more and more
From steps too bright to see,
A certain measure that was like some spell
Of winding magic, wherein heaven and hell
Were joined to lull men's souls eternally
In some mid ecstasy:

For it was so inexplicably wrought
Of soft alternate motions, that she taught
Each sweeping supple limb,
And in such intricate and wondrous ways
With bendings of her body, that the praise
Lost breath upon men's lips, and all grew dim
Save her so bright and slim.

And through the swift mesh'd serpents of her hair
That lash'd and leapt on each place white and fair
Of bosom or of arm,
And through the blazing of the numberless
And whirling jewelled fires of her dress,
Her perfect face no passion could disarm
Of its reposeful charm.

Her head oft drooped as in some languid death
Beneath brim tastes of joy, and her rich breath
Heaved faintly from her breast;
Her long eyes, opened fervently and wide,
Did seem with endless rapture to abide
In some fair trance through which the soul possest
Love, ecstasy, and rest.

THE FOUNTAIN OF TEARS

(1870)

If you go over desert and mountain,
Far into the country of sorrow,
To-day and to-night and to-morrow,

And maybe for months and for years;
You shall come, with a heart that is bursting
For trouble and toiling and thirsting,
You shall certainly come to the fountain
At length,—to the Fountain of Tears.

Very peaceful the place is, and solely
For piteous lamenting and sighing,
And those who come living or dying
Alike from their hopes and their fears;
Full of cypress-like shadows the place is,
And statues that cover their faces:
But out of the gloom springs the holy
And beautiful Fountain of Tears.

And it flows and it flows with a motion
So gentle and lovely and listless,
And murmurs a tune so resistless
To him who hath suffered and hears—
You shall surely—without a word spoken,
Kneel down there and know your heart broken,
And yield to the long curb'd emotion
That day by the Fountain of Tears.

For it grows and it grows, as though leaping
Up higher the more one is thinking;
And ever its tunes go on sinking
More poignantly into the ears:
Yea, so blessèd and good seems that fountain,
Reached after dry desert and mountain,
You shall fall down at length in your weeping
And bathe your sad face in the tears.

Then, alas! while you lie there a season,
And sob between living and dying,
And give up the land you were trying
To find mid your hopes and your fears;
—O the world shall come up and pass o'er you;
Strong men shall not stay to care for you,
Nor wonder indeed for what reason
Your way should seem harder than theirs.

But perhaps, while you lie, never lifting
Your cheek from the wet leaves it presses,
Nor caring to raise your wet tresses
And look how the cold world appears,—
O perhaps the mere silences round you—
All things in that place grief hath found you,
Yea, e'en to the clouds o'er you drifting,
May soothe you somewhat through your tears.

You may feel, when a falling leaf brushes
Your face, as though some one had kissed you;
Or think at least some one who missed you
Hath sent you a thought,—if that cheers;
Or a bird's little song, faint and broken,
May pass for a tender word spoken:
—Enough, while around you there rushes
That life-drowning torrent of tears.

And the tears shall flow faster and faster,
Brim over, and baffle resistance,
And roll down bleared roads to each distance
Of past desolation and years;
Till they cover the place of each sorrow,
And leave you no past and no morrow:
For what man is able to master
And stem the great Fountain of Tears?

But the floods of the tears meet and gather;
The sound of them all grows like thunder:
—O into what bosom, I wonder,
Is poured the whole sorrow of years?
For Eternity only seems keeping
Account of the great human weeping:
May God then, the Maker and Father—
May He find a place for the tears!

From "CHAITIVEL"

(1872)

Hath any loved you well, down there,
Summer or winter through?
Down there, have you found any fair
Laid in the grave with you?
Is death's long kiss a richer kiss
Than mine was wont to be—
Or have you gone to some far bliss
And quite forgotten me?

What soft enamouring of sleep
Hath you in some soft way?
What charmed death holdeth you with deep
Strange lure by night and day?

—A little space below the grass,
Out of the sun and shade;
But worlds away from me, alas,
Down there where you are laid?

My bright hair's waved and wasted gold,
What is it now to thee—
Whether the rose-red life I hold
Or white death holdeth me?
Down there you love the grave's own green,
And evermore you rave
Of some sweet seraph you have seen
Or dreamt of in the grave.

There you shall lie as you have lain,
Though in the world above,
Another live your life again,
Loving again your love:
Is it not sweet beneath the palm?
Is not the warm day rife
With some long mystic golden calm
Better than love and life?

The broad quaint odorous leaves like hands
Weaving the fair day through,
Weave sleep no burnished bird withstands
While death weaves sleep for you;
And many a strange rich breathing sound
Ravishes morn and noon:
And in that place you must have found
Death a delicious swoon.

Hold me no longer for a word
I used to say or sing:
Ah, long ago you must have heard
So many a sweeter thing:
For rich earth must have reached your heart
And turned the faith to flowers;
And warm wind stolen, part by part,
Your soul through faithless hours.

And many a soft seed must have won
Soil of some yielding thought,
To bring a bloom up to the sun
That else had ne'er been brought;
And, doubtless, many a passionate hue
Hath made that place more fair,
Making some passionate part of you
Faithless to me down there.

ODE

(1874)

We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;—
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams;
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.

With wonderful deathless ditties
We build up the world's great cities,
And out of a fabulous story
We fashion an empire's glory:
One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And three with a new song's measure
Can trample a kingdom down.

We, in the ages lying
In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with our sighing,
And Babel itself in our mirth;
And o'erthrew them with prophesying
To the old of the new world's worth;
For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

SONG

(1874)

I made another garden, yea,
For my new love;
I left the dead rose where it lay,
And set the new above.
Why did the summer not begin?
Why did my heart not haste?
My old love came and walked therein,
And laid the garden waste.

She entered with her weary smile,
Just as of old;
She looked around a little while,
And shivered at the cold.
Her passing touch was death to all,
Her passing look a blight:
She made the white rose-petals fall,
And turned the red rose white.

Her pale robe, clinging to the grass,
Seemed like a snake
That bit the grass and ground, alas!
And a sad trail did make.
She went up slowly to the gate;
And there, just as of yore,
She turned back at the last to wait,
And say farewell once more.

SONG

(1874)

Has summer come without the rose,
  Or left the bird behind?
Is the blue changed above thee,
  O world! or am I blind?
Will you change every flower that grows,
Or only change this spot,
Where she who said, I love thee,
  Now says, I love thee not?

The skies seemed true above thee,
  The rose true on the tree;
The bird seemed true the summer through,
  But all proved false to me.

SONG

(1874)

World! is there one good thing in you,
  Life, love, or death—or what?
Since lips that sang, I love thee,
  Have said, I love thee not?

I think the sun's kiss will scarce fall
  Into one flower's gold cup;
I think the bird will miss me,
  And give the summer up.
O sweet place! desolate in tall
  Wild grass, have you forgot
How her lips loved to kiss me,
  Now that they kiss me not?

Be false or fair above me,
  Come back with any face,
Summer!—do I care what you do?
  You cannot change one place—
The grass, the leaves, the earth, the dew,
  The grave I make the spot—
Here, where she used to love me,
  Here, where she loves me not.

SONG OF PALMS

(1874)

Mighty, luminous, and calm
Is the country of the palm,
  Crowned with sunset and sunrise,
  Under blue unbroken skies,
Waving from green zone to zone,
Over wonders of its own;
Trackless, untraversed, unknown,
  Changeless through the centuries.

Who can say what thing it bears?
  Blazing bird and blooming flower,
Dwelling there for years and years,
  Hold the enchanted secret theirs:
Life and death and dream have made
Mysteries in many a shade,
Hollow haunt and hidden bower
Closed alike to sun and shower.

Who is ruler of each race
Living in each boundless place,
  Growing, flowering, and flying,
  Glowing, revelling, and dying?
Wave-like, palm by palm is stirred,
And the bird sings to the bird,
And the day sings one rich word,
  And the great night comes replying.

Long red reaches of the cane,
Yellow winding water-lane,
  Verdant isle and amber river,
Lisp and murmur back again,
  And ripe under-worlds deliver
Rapturous souls of perfume, hurled
  Up to where green oceans quiver
In the wide leaves' restless world.

Many thousand years have been,
And the sun alone hath seen,
  Like a high and radiant ocean,
  All the fair palm world in motion;
But the crimson bird hath fed
With its mate of equal red,
  And the flower in soft explosion
With the flower hath been wed.

And its long luxuriant thought
Lofty palm to palm hath taught,
  While a single vast liana
All one brotherhood hath wrought,
  Crossing forest and savannah,
Binding fern and coco-tree,
  Fig-tree, buttress-tree, banana,
Dwarf cane and tall mariti.

A LOVE SYMPHONY

(1881)

Along the garden ways just now
  I heard the flowers speak;
The white rose told me of your brow,
  The red rose of your cheek;
The lily of your bended head,
  The bindweed of your hair:
Each looked its loveliest and said
  You were more fair.

I went into the wood anon,
And heard the wild birds sing
How sweet you were; they warbled on,
Piped, trilled the self-same thing.
Thrush, blackbird, linnet, without pause,
The burden did repeat,
And still began again because
You were more sweet.

And then I went down to the sea,
And heard it murmuring too,
Part of an ancient mystery,
All made of me and you.
How many a thousand years ago
I loved, and you were sweet—
Longer I could not stay, and so
I fled back to your feet.

WILFRED SCAWEN BLUNT (1840–1922)

From *THE LOVE SONNETS OF PROTEUS*

(1875)

I

DEDICATION

To Robert, Lord Lytton
(1880)

TO ONE IN A HIGH POSITION

To you, a poet, glorious, heaven-born,
One who is not a poet but a son
Of the earth earthy, sick and travel-worn
And weary with a race already run,
A battle lost e'er yet his day is done,
Comes with this tribute, shattered banners torn
From a defeat. You reign in Macedon,
My Alexander, as at earlier morn
You reigned upon Parnassus, hero, king.
I reign no more, not even in those hearts
For which these songs were made, and if I sing
'Tis with a harsh and melancholy note
At which my own heart like an echo starts.
Yet sometimes I can deem you listening,
And then all else is instantly forgot.

PART I—TO MANON

II

COMPARING HER TO A FALCON

Brave as a falcon and as merciless,
With bright eyes watching still the world, thy prey,
I saw thee pass in thy lone majesty,
Untamed, unmated, high above the press.
The dull crowd gazed at thee. It could not guess
The secret of thy proud aërial way,
Or read in thy mute face the soul which lay
A prisoner there in chains of tenderness
—Lo, thou art captured. In my hand to-day
I hold thee, and awhile thou deignest to be
Pleased with my jesses. I would fain beguile
My foolish heart to think thou lovest me
See,
I dare not love thee quite. A little while
And thou shalt sail back heavenwards
Woe is me!

III

ON HIS FORTUNE IN LOVING HER

I did not choose thee, dearest. It was love
That made the choice, not I. Mine eyes were blind
As a rude shepherd's who to some lone grove
His offering brings, and cares not at what shrine
He bends his knee. The gifts alone were mine;
The rest was Love's. He took me by the hand,
And fired the sacrifice, and poured the wine,
And spoke the words I might not understand.
I was unwise in all but the dear chance
Which was my fortune, and the blind desire
Which led my foolish steps to Love's abode,
And youth's sublime unreasoned prescience
Which raised an altar and inscribed in fire
Its dedication: "To the unknown god."

IV

IN PRAISE OF HIS FATE

When I hear others speak of this and that
In our fools' lives which might have been better gone,

Complaining idly of too niggard fate
And wishing still their senseless past undone,
I feel a childish tremor through me run,
Stronger than reason, lest by some far chance
Fate's ear to our sad plaints should yet be won
And these our lives be thrown back on our hands.
I tremble when I think of my past years,
My hopes, my aims, my wishes. All these days
I might have wandered far from Love and thee.
But kind fate held me, heedless of my prayers,
A prisoner to its wise mysterious ways,
And forced me to thy feet—ah fortunate me!

V

ON THE POWER OF HER BEAUTY

I am lighthearted now. An hour ago
There was a tempest in my heaven, a flame
Of sullen lightning under a bent brow
And a dull muttering which breathed no name.
Now all is changed. The very winds are tame,
And the birds sing aloud from every bough,
And my heart leaps. What empire dost thou claim,
Child, o'er this Earth, that nature serves thee so?
Sublime magician! Well may Earth and Heaven
Change at thy bidding, and the hearts of men.
Didst thou but know the power that beauty hath,
The sea should leave his bed, the rocks be riven,
And wise men, deeming chaos come again,
Should kneel before thee and conjure thy wrath.

VI

DEPRECIATING HER BEAUTY

I love not thy perfections. When I hear
Thy beauty blazoned, and the common tongue
Cheapening with vulgar praise a lip, an ear,
A cheek that I have prayed to;—when among
The loud world's gods my god is noised and sung,
Her wit applauded, even her taste, her dress,
Her each dear hidden marvel lightly flung
At the world's feet and stripped to nakedness—
Then I despise thy beauty utterly,
Crying, "Be these your gods, O Israel!"
And I remember that on such a day
I found thee with eyes bleared and cheeks all pale,
And lips that trembled to a voiceless cry,
And that thy bosom in my bosom lay.

VII

ON HER VANITY

What are these things thou lovest? Vanity.
To see men turn their heads when thou dost pass;
To be the signboard and the looking-glass
Where every idler there may glut his eye;
To hear men speak thy name mysteriously,
Wagging their heads. Is it for this, alas,
That thou hast made a placard of a face
On which the tears of love were hardly dry?
What are these things thou lovest? The applause
Of prostitutes at wit which is not thine;
The sympathy of shop-boys who would weep
Their shilling's worth of woe in any cause,
At any tragedy.—Their tears and mine,
What difference? Oh truly tears are cheap!

VIII

AS TO HIS CHOICE OF HER

If I had chosen thee, thou shouldst have been
A virgin proud, untamed, immaculate,
Chaste as the morning star, a saint, a queen,
Scarred by no wars, no violence of hate.
Thou shouldst have been of soul commensurate
With thy fair body, brave and virtuous
And kind and just; and, if of poor estate,
At least an honest woman for my house.

I would have had thee come of honored blood
And honorable nurture. Thou shouldst bear
Sons to my pride and daughters to my heart,
And men should hold thee happy, wise, and good.
Lo, thou art none of this, but only fair.
Yet must I love thee, dear, and as thou art.

IX

ON HER WAYWARDNESS

This is rank slavery. It better were
To till the thankless earth with sweat of brow,
Following dull oxen 'neath a goad of care
To a boor's grave agape behind the plough.
It better were to linger in some slow
Unnatural case, the sport of flood or fire,
To be undone by some inhuman vow
And robbed in youth of youth and its desire.
It better were to perish than thus live
Thy pensioner and bondsman, day by day
Doing fool's service thus for love of thee.
How shall I save thee if thou wilt not grieve
Even for shames like these? How shall I slay
The foes thou lovest, thou, their enemy?

X

ON HER FORGIVENESS OF A WRONG

This is not virtue. To forgive were great
If love were in the issue and not gold.
But wrongs there are 'tis treason to forget,
And to forgive before the deed was cold
Was a strange jest. Ah, Manon, you have sold
The keys of heaven at a vulgar rate,
A sum of money for the wealth untold
Of a just anger and the right to hate.
—Well. It is done and the price paid. Now make
Haste to betray them as you me betrayed.
These are no longer foes to be forgiven.
Remember they are friends, that peace is made,
That you are theirs. Then rend them for love's sake,
And let your hatred with your love be even.

XI

ON HER LIGHTHEARTEDNESS

I would I had thy courage, dear, to fa
This bankruptcy of love, and greet despa
With smiling eyes and unconcerned en
brace,
And these few words of banter at "du
care."
I would that I could sing and comb m
hair
Like thee the morning thro', and choos
my dress,
And gravely argue what I best shoul
wear,
A shade of ribbon or a fold of lace.
I would I had thy courage and thy peace,
Peace passing understanding; that min
eyes
Could find forgetfulness like thine i
sleep;
That all the past for me like thee coul
cease
And leave me cheerfully, sublimely wis
Like David with washed face who cease
to weep.

XII

ON READING CERTAIN LETTERS

Reading these lines, this record of lost day
Where I am not, and yet where love ha
been,
This tale of passions consecrate to men
Other than me, unwitting of my ways,
I seem to hear some pagan chaunt o
praise
Hymned to an idol shrine in gardens green
Some wild soft worship of a god obscene
Some idle homage to an idol face.
I shut my ears, yet hear it still. My eye
See not, yet see the unchaste, the unlawfu
fire;
I scent the odor of the sacrifice,
And feel the victim's shriek. Then in m
ire
I rise up, as on Horeb, and I cry,
"There is none other god, but only I!"

XIII

HE DARES NOT DIE

Four hours by the clock! How strange i
is! Four hours
Since love and life, the future and the past

Died with the shutting of these silent doors,
And thought became to me one purpose vast.
I have not moved from where she sat. The cast
Of her fingers on this cushion lightly scores
Its surface still; and still I hear the last
Tones of her laughter, and here lie her flowers.
Poor flowers! The ugliness of grief has wrought
Your change already. No besotted bloom
Of a false dawn has lured you to base life.
You at the pinch were brave and trifled not,
Going ungrudging to our common doom.
And I? Ah God! I have not faced the knife!

XIV

HE HAS FALLEN FROM THE HEIGHT OF HIS LOVE

Love, how ignobly hast thou met thy doom!
Ill-seasoned scaffolding by which, full-fraught
With passionate youth and mighty hopes, we clomb
To our heart's heaven, fearing, doubting, naught!
Oh love, thou wert too frail for such mad sport,
Too rotten at thy core, designed too high:
And we who trusted thee our death have bought,
And bleeding on the ground must surely die.
—I will not see her. What she now may be
I care not. For the dream within my brain
Is fairer, nobler, and more kind than she;
And with that vision I can mock at pain.
God! Was there ever woman half so sweet,
Or death so bitter, or at such dear feet?

XV

COMPLAINING THAT HE HAD FALLEN AMONG THIEVES

Oh, Lytton, I have gambled with my soul,
And, like a spendthrift, pawned my heritage
To pitiless Jews, and paid a monstrous toll
To knaves and usurers,—and all to wage
Fair war with black-legs, men who dared to gauge
My youth's bright honor as an antique thing,
A broadsword to their fencing point and edge.
So the game went. And even yet I cling
To my mad humor, reckoning up each stake,
Each fair coin lost.—O miserable slaves,
Who for the sake of gold, the poorest thing
Man ever won from the earth's bosom, take
To rope or poison, and who labor not
Even to "dig dishonorable graves,"
See one who has lost a pound for every groat,
For every penny of your squandering!

XVI

HE ARGUES WITH HIS LIFE

My life, what strange mad garments hast thou on,
Now that I see thee truly and am wise!
Thou wild, lost Proteus, strangling and undone!
What shapes are these, what metamorphoses
Of a god's soul in pain? I hear thy cries
And see thee writhe and take fantastic forms,
And strike in blindness at the destinies
And at thyself, and at thy brother worms.
Ah, foolish worm, thou canst not change thy lot,
And all like thee must perish 'neath the sun.
Why struggle with thy fellows? Nay, be kind,
Kinder than these. Behold, the flower-pot
Of fate is emptied out, and one by one
The fisher takes you, and his hooks are blind.

XVII

JOY'S TREACHERY

I had a live joy once and pampered her,
For I had brought her from the "golden East,"
To lie when nights were cold upon my breast
And sit beside me the long days and purr,

Until her whole soul should be lapped in fur,
Deep as her claws; a beautiful sleek beast,
Which I might love.—But, when I deemed it least,
Her topaz eyes were on my stomacher,
Athirst for blood. Thus, for I loathed her since
I learned her guile, one night I had her slain
And thrown upon a dunghill to the flies,
Who bred in her fair limbs a pestilence,
Whereof I sickened.—Thus it ever is:
Dead joys unburied breed us death and pain.

XVIII

HE LAMENTS THAT HIS LOVE IS DEAD

My love is dead, dead and in spite of me,—
Dead while I live,—while yet my blood was rife
With hope and pleasure and the pride of life.
For my love ended unexpectedly
During the Winter, stricken like a tree
By a night's cold, and frozen to the blood,
Whose leaves fell off and never were renewed
By any promise of the years to be.
And, when the Spring came, and the birds, to mate
Among its branches, lo! they found it bare,
Though all around was Summer in the wood.
Yet they took heart awhile, incredulous
That such a tree should be for ever dead.
"'Tis early yet," they cried. "The Spring is late,
It shall still be as in the days that were."
But Summer came and went while the tree stood
Bare in the sun like a deserted house.
—Then the birds suddenly despaired and fled.

XIX

HE PROTESTS, NOTWITHSTANDING, HIS LOVE

To be cast forth from the fair light of heaven
Into the outer darkness and there lie,
Through unrecorded years of agony,
Unseen, unheard, unpitied, unforgiven;
To be forgotten of the earth and sky,
Forgotten of the womb that once did bear
The eyes that cheered, the voice that comforted,
The very breast where love had laid his head;
To be alone with darkness and despair,
Alone with endless death, and not to die:
All these be punishments within the hand
Of an avenging deity to deal.
To these I bow in weakness as behoves.
Yet not in anger but in love I stand
'Gainst heaven, a new Prometheus, and appeal
From God to my own soul which ceaseless loves.
His be the wrath, the burning and the rod
Hell shall not make me traitor to my God

XX

ON FALLING ILL THROUGH GRIEF

Truce to thee, Soul! I have a debt to pay
Which I acknowledge and without thy pleading.
I like thee little that thou barrest my way
With prayers too late for one well past thy heeding.
Truce to these tears! Thy fellow lieth bleeding,
Wounded by thee; and thou, forsooth, dost say,
"I have a servant who is sick and needing
Care at men's hands." The care was thine to pay.
—When this same Soul was sick, a while ago,
The Body watched her, till his eyes grew dim
And his cheeks pale for very sympathy
Because she grieved. His love has wrought him woe,
For he is sick and she despiseth him.
Poor Body, I must take some thought of thee.

XXI

HIS BONDAGE TO MANON IS BROKEN

From this day forth I lead another life
Another life! A life without a tear!
To-day has ended the unequal strife;
My service and my sorrow finish here.
See, my soul cuts her cable of belief
And sails towards the ocean. She shall steer

Sublime henceforth o'er accidents of grief.
Her storm has rolled to a new Hemisphere.
I have loved too much, too loyally, too long.
To-day I am a pirate of the sea.
Let others suffer. I have suffered wrong.
Let others love, and love as tenderly.
Oh, Manon, there are women yet unborn
Shall rue thy frailty, else am I forsworn.

From PART III—GODS AND FALSE GODS

LV. ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

To-day, all day, I rode upon the Down,
With hounds and horsemen, a brave company.
On this side in its glory lay the sea,
On that the Sussex Weald, a sea of brown.
The wind was light, and brightly the sun shone,
And still we galloped on from gorse to gorse.
And once, when checked, a thrush sang, and my horse
Pricked his quick ears as to a sound unknown.
I knew the Spring was come. I knew it even
Better than all by this, that through my chase
In bush and stone and hill and sea and heaven
I seemed to see and follow still your face.
Your face my quarry was. For it I rode,
My horse a thing of wings, myself a god.

LXIX. SIBYLLINE BOOKS

When first, a boy, at your fair knees I kneeled,
'Twas with a worthy offering. In my hand
My young life's book I held, a volume sealed,
Which none but you, I deemed, might understand.
And you I did entreat to loose the band
And read therein your own soul's destiny.
But, Tarquin-like, you turned from my demand,
Too proudly fair to find your fate in me.
When now I come, alas, what hands have turned
Those virgin pages! Some are torn away,
And some defaced, and some with passion burned,
And some besmeared with life's least holy clay.
Say, shall I offer you these pages wet
With blood and tears? And will your sorrow read
What your joy heeded not?—Unopened yet
One page remains. It still may hold a fate,
A counsel for the day of utter need.
Nay, speak, sad heart, speak quick. The hour is late.
Age threatens us. The Gaul is at the gate.

LXXI. THE TWO HIGHWAYMEN

I long have had a quarrel set with Time
Because he robbed me. Every day of life
Was wrested from me after bitter strife,
I never yet could see the sun go down
But I was angry in my heart, nor hear
The leaves fall in the wind without a tear
Over the dying summer. I have known
No truce with Time nor Time's accomplice, Death.
The fair world is the witness of a crime
Repeated every hour. For life and breath
Are sweet to all who live; and bitterly
The voices of these robbers of the heath
Sound in each ear and chill the passer-by.
—What have we done to thee, thou monstrous Time?
What have we done to Death that we must die?

From *THE LOVE LYRICS OF PROTEUS*

(1875)

A NOCTURNE

The Moon has gone to her rest,
A full hour ago.
The Pleiads have found a nest
In the waves below.
Slow, the Hours one by one
In Midnight's footsteps creep.
Lovers who lie alone
Soon wake to weep.
Slow-footed tortoise Hours, will ye not hasten on,
Till from his prison
In the golden East
A new day shall have risen,
And the last stars be gone,

Like guests belated from a bridal feast?
When the long night is done
Then shall ye sleep.

SONG.—WILT THOU TAKE ME FOR THY SLAVE?

Wilt thou take me for thy slave,
With my folly and my love?
Wilt thou take me for the bondsman of thy pride?
Thou who dearer art to me than all the world beside;
For I love thee as no other man can love.

Wilt thou take me to thy soul,
For the truth which thou shalt prove?
Wilt thou clothe me with the riches of thy care?
Thou who dearer art to me than gold and jewels rare;
For I love thee as no other man can love.

Wilt thou take me for thy king,
While the sun and stars shall move?
Wilt thou pay me back the homage I have given?
Oh thou dearer unto me than sun and stars and heaven!
For I love thee as no other man can love.

THE STRICKEN HART

The stricken hart had fled the brake,
His courage spent for life's dear sake.
He came to die beside the lake.

The golden trout leaped up to view,
The moorfowl clapped his wings and crew,
The swallow brushed him as she flew.

He looked upon the glorious sun,
His blood dropped slowly on the stone,
He loved the life so nearly won,

And then he died. The ravens found
A carcase couched upon the ground,
They said their god had dealt the wound.

The Eternal Father calmly shook
One page untitled from life's book.
Few words. None ever cared to look.

Yet woe for life thus idly riven.
He blindly loved what God had given,
And love, some say, has conquered Heaven.

SONG.—NOT A WORD

Love, my heart is faint with waiting,
Faint with hope and joy deferred,
All night long at this sad grating,
Sleepless like a prisoned bird,
Singing low,
Singing slow:
Come, ah come, love.—Not a word!

Love, in vain for thee this token
Did I tie, poor silken cord,
To my window. See, 'tis broken
And the strands fly heavenward.
All are free,
All but me.
Come, ah come, love.—Not a word!

Lo, the first sad streak of morning
Cleaves the heaven like a sword.
Love, too late I hear the warning
Of thy footstep on the sward.
Yet, ah yet,
Though 'tis late,
Come, but mind, love.—Not a word!

SONG.—YOU HAVE LET THE BEAUTY OF THE DAY GO OVER

You have let the beauty of the day go over
You have let the glory of the noon go by.
Clouds from the West have gathered close and cover
All but a remnant now of our proud sky

Dumbly the rain beats on our darkened faces.
Hushed are the woods. Alas, for us no bird
Shall sing to-day of pleasure in green places,
No touch shall thrill, no soul of leaves be stirred.

Why did we wait? What faith was our in fortune?

What was our pride that fate should kneel to us?
Oh, we were fools. Love loves not to importune,
And he is silent here in this sad house.

Alas, dear love, the day for us is ended,
The pleasure of green fields, of streams, of skies.
One hour remains, one only of joy blended
With coming night. Ah, seize it ere it flies.

Draw fast the curtains. Close the door on sorrow.
Shut out the dusk. It only makes us grieve.
Here we may live a life,—and then, tomorrow,
If fate still wills it, we may take our leave.

From "ESTHER"

(1892)

LI

When I hear music from a tavern door,
When I see crowds agape and in the rain
Watching on tiptoe and with stifled roar
To see a rocket fired or a bull slain,
When misers handle gold, when orators
Touch strong men's hearts with glory till they weep,
When cities deck their streets for barren wars
Which have laid waste their youth, and when I keep
Calmly the count of my own life and see
On what poor stuff my manhood's dreams were fed
Till I too learned what dole of vanity
Will serve a human soul for daily bread,
—Then I remember that I once was young
And lived with Esther the world's gods among.

ROBERT BRIDGES (1844——)

From "THE GROWTH OF LOVE"

(1889)

LXII

I will be what God made me, nor protest
Against the bent of genius in my time,
That science of my friends robs all the best,
While I love beauty, and was born to rhyme.
Be they our mighty men, and let me dwell
In shadow among the mighty shades of old,
With love's forsaken palace for my cell:
Whence I look forth and all the world behold,
And say, These better days, in best things worse,
This bastardy of time's magnificence,
Will mend in fashion and throw off the curse,
To crown new love with higher excellence.
Curs'd tho' I be to live my life alone,
My toil is for man's joy, his joy my own.

POOR WITHERED ROSE AND DRY

(1873)

Poor withered rose and dry,
Skeleton of a rose,
Risen to testify
To love's sad close:

Treasured for love's sweet sake,
That of joy past
Thou might'st again awake
Memory at last.

Yet in thy perfume sweet;
Thy petals red
Yet tell of summer heat,
And the gay bed:

Yet, yet recall the glow
Of the gazing sun,
When at thy bush we two
Joined hands in one.

But, rose, thou hast not seen,
Thou hast not wept

The change that passed between,
Whilst thou hast slept.

To me thou seemest yet
The dead dream's thrall:
While I live and forget
Dream, truth and all.

Thou art more fresh than I,
Rose, sweet and red:
Salt on my pale cheeks lie
The tears I shed.

TRIOLET

(1873)

When first we met we did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master;
Of more than common friendliness
When first we met we did not guess.
Who could foretell this sore distress
This irretrievable disaster
When first we met?—We did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master.

TRIOLET

(1873)

All women born are so perverse
No man need boast their love possessing.
If nought seem better, nothing's worse:
All women born are so perverse.
From Adam's wife, that proved a curse
Though God had made her for a blessing,
All women born are so perverse
No man need boast their love possessing.

A PASSER-BY

(1879)

Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,
Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West,
That fearest nor sea rising, nor sky clouding,
Whither away, fair rover, and what thy quest?
Ah, soon, when Winter has all our vales opprest,
When skies are cold and misty, and hail is hurling,
Wilt thou glide on the blue Pacific, or rest
In a summer haven asleep, thy white sail furling.

I there before thee, in the country that well thou knowest,
Already arrived am inhaling the odorous air.
I watch thee enter unerringly where thou goest,
And anchor queen of the strange shipping there,
Thy sails for awnings spread, thy masts bare;
Nor is aught from the foaming reef to the snow-capped, grandest
Peak, that is over the feathery palms more fair
Than thou, so upright, so stately, and still thou standest.

And yet, O splendid ship, unhailed and nameless,
I know not if, aiming a fancy, I rightly divine
That thou hast a purpose joyful, a courage blameless,
Thy port assured in a happier land than mine.
But for all I have given thee, beauty enough is thine,
As thou, aslant with trim tackle and shrouding,
From the proud nostril curve of a prow's line
In the offing scatterest foam, thy white sails crowding.

LATE SPRING EVENING

(1879)

I saw the Virgin-mother clad in green
Walking the sprinkled meadows at sundown;
While yet the moon's cold flame was hung between
The day and night, above the dusky town
I saw her brighter than the Western gold,
Whereto she faced in splendor to behold.

Her dress was greener than the tenderest leaf
That trembled in the sunset glare aglow
Herself more delicate than is the brief,

Pink apple-blossom, that May showers lay low,
And more delicious than's the earliest streak
The blushing rose shows of her crimson cheek.

As if to match the sight that so did please,
A music entered, making passion fain:
Three nightingales sat singing in the trees,
And praised the Goddess for the fallen rain;
Which yet their unseen motions did arouse,
Or parting Zephyrs shook out from the boughs.

And o'er the treetops, scattered in mid air,
The exhausted clouds, laden with crimson light
Floated, or seemed to sleep; and, highest there,
One planet broke the lingering ranks of night;
Daring day's company, so he might spy
The Virgin-queen once with his watchful eye.

And when I saw her, then I worshipped her,
And said,—O bounteous Spring, O beauteous Spring,
Mother of all my years, thou who dost stir
My heart to adore thee and my tongue to sing,
Flower of my fruit, of my heart's blood the fire,
Of all my satisfaction the desire!

How art thou every year more beautiful,
Younger for all the winters thou hast cast:
And I, for all my love grows, grow more dull,
Decaying with each season overpast!
In vain to teach him love must man employ thee,
The more he learns the less he can enjoy thee.

WOOING

(1879)

I know not how I came,
New on my knightly journey,
To win the fairest dame
That graced my maiden tourney.

Chivalry's lovely prize
With all men's gaze upon her,
Why did she free her eyes
On me, to do me honor?

Ah! ne'er had I my mind
With such high hope delighted,
Had she not first inclined,
And with her eyes invited.

But never doubt I knew,
Having their glance to cheer me,
Until the day joy grew
Too great, too sure, too near me.

When hope a fear became,
And passion, grown too tender,
Now trembled at the shame
Of a despised surrender;

And where my love at first
Saw kindness in her smiling,
I read her pride, and cursed
The arts of her beguiling.

Till winning less than won,
And liker wooed than wooing,
Too late I turned undone
Away from my undoing;

And stood beside the door,
Whereto she followed, making
My hard leave-taking more
Hard by her sweet leave-taking.

Her speech would have betrayed
Her thought, had mine been colder:
Her eyes' distress had made
A lesser lover bolder.

But no! Fond heart, distrust,
Cried Wisdom, and consider:
Go free, since go thou must;—
And so farewell I bid her.

And brisk upon my way
I smote the stroke to sever,
And should have lost that day
My life's delight for ever:

But when I saw her start
And turn aside and tremble;—
Ah! she was true, her heart
I knew did not dissemble.

THERE IS A HILL BESIDE THE SILVER THAMES

(1879)

There is a hill beside the silver Thames,
Shady with birch and beech and odorous pine:
And brilliant underfoot with thousand gems
Steeply the thickets to his floods decline.
Straight trees in every place
Their thick tops interlace,
And pendant branches trail their foliage fine
Upon his watery face.

Swift from the sweltering pasturage he flows:
His stream, alert to seek the pleasant shade,
Pictures his gentle purpose, as he goes
Straight to the caverned pool his toil has made.
His winter floods lay bare
The stout roots in the air:
His summer streams are cool, when they have played
Among their fibrous hair.

A rushy island guards the sacred bower,
And hides it from the meadow, where in peace
The lazy cows wrench many a scented flower,
Robbing the golden market of the bees:
And laden barges float
By banks of myosote;
And scented flag and golden flower-de-lys
Delay the loitering boat.

And on this side the island, where the pool
Eddies away, are tangled mass on mass
The water-weeds, that net the fishes cool,
And scarce allow a narrow stream to pass;
Where spreading crowfoot mars
The drowning nenuphars,
Waving the tassels of her silken grass
Below her silver stars.

But in the purple pool there nothing grows,
Not the white water-lily spoked with gold;
Though best she loves the hollows, and well knows
On quiet streams her broad shields to unfold:
Yet should her roots but try
Within these deeps to lie,
Not her long reaching stalk could ever hold
Her waxen head so high.

Sometimes an angler comes, and drops his hook
Within its hidden depths, and 'gainst a tree
Leaning his rod, reads in some pleasant book,
Forgetting soon his pride of fishery;
And dreams, or falls asleep,
While curious fishes peep
About his nibbled bait, or scornfully
Dart off and rise and leap.

And sometimes a slow figure 'neath the trees,
In ancient-fashioned smock, with tottering care
Upon a staff propping his weary knees,
May by the pathway of the forest fare:
As from a buried day
Across the 'mind will stray
Some perishing mute shadow,—and unaware
He passeth on his way.

Else, he that wishes solitude is safe,
Whether he bathe at morning in the stream:
Or lead his love there when the hot hours chafe
The meadows, busy with a blurring steam;
Or watch, as fades the light,
The gibbous moon grow bright,
Until her magic rays dance in a dream,
And glorify the night.

Where is this bower beside the silver Thames?
O pool and flowery thickets, hear my vow
O trees of freshest foliage and straight stems,
No sharer of my secret I allow:
Lest ere I come the while
Strange feet your shades defile;
Or lest the burly oarsman turn his prow
Within your guardian isle.

HASTE ON, MY JOYS! YOUR TREASURE LIES

(1880)

Haste on, my joys! your treasure lies
In swift, unceasing flight.

O haste: for while your beauty flies
I seize your full delight.
Lo! I have seen the scented flower,
Whose tender stems I cull,
For her brief date and meted hour
Appear more beautiful.

O youth, O strength, O most divine
For that so short ye prove;
Were but your rare gifts longer mine,
Ye scarce would win my love.
Nay, life itself the heart would spurn,
Did once the days restore
The days, that once enjoyed return,
Return—ah! nevermore.

THE CLOUDS HAVE LEFT THE SKY

(1890)

The clouds have left the sky
The wind hath left the sea,
The half-moon up on high
Shrinketh her face of dree.

She lightens on the comb
Of leaden waves, that roar
And thrust their hurried foam
Up on the dusky shore.

Behind the western bars
The shrouded day retreats,
And unperceived the stars
Steal to their sovran seats.

And whiter grows the foam,
The small moon lightens more;
And as I turn me home,
My shadow walks before.

ANGEL SPIRITS OF SLEEP

(1890)

Angel spirits of sleep,
White-robed, with silver hair,
In your meadows fair,
Where the willows weep,
And the sad moonbeam
On the gliding stream
Writes her scattered dream:

Angel spirits of sleep,
Dancing to the weir
In the hollow roar
Of its waters deep;
Know ye how men say
That ye haunt no more
Isle and grassy shore
With your moonlit play;
That ye dance not here,
White-robed spirits of sleep,
All the summer night
Threading dances light?

THE SNOW LIES SPRINKLED ON THE BEACH

(1890)

The snow lies sprinkled on the beach,
And whitens all the marshy lea:
The sad gulls wail adown the gale,
The day is dark and black the sea.
Shorn of their crests the blighted waves
With driven foam the offing fleck:
The ebb is low and barely laves
The red rust of the giant wreck.

On such a stony, breaking beach
My childhood chanced and chose to be:
'Twas here I played, and musing made
My friend the melancholy sea.
He from his dim enchanted caves
With shuddering roar and onrush wild
Fell down in sacrificial waves
At feet of his exulting child.

Unto a spirit too light for fear
His wrath was mirth, his wail was glee:—
My heart is now too fixed to bow
Tho' all his tempests howl at me:
For to the gain life's summer saves,
My solemn joy's increasing store,
The tossing of his mournful waves
Makes sweetest music evermore.

NIGHTINGALES

(1893)

Beautiful must be the mountains whence ye come,
And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams, wherefrom
Ye learn your song:
Where are those starry woods? O might I wander there,
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air
Bloom the year long!

Nay, barren are those mountains and spent
the streams:
Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts
our dreams,
A throe of the heart,
Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes
profound,
No dying cadence nor long sigh can
sound,
For all our art.

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and
then,
As night is withdrawn
From these sweet-springing meads and
bursting boughs of May,
Dream, while the innumerable choir of
day
Welcome the dawn.

I HAVE LOVED FLOWERS THAT FADE

(1879)

I have loved flowers that fade,
Within those magic tents
Rich hues have marriage made
With sweet unmemoried scents:
A honeymoon delight,—
A joy of love at sight,
That ages in an hour:—
My song be like a flower!

I have loved airs, that die
Before their charm is writ
Along a liquid sky
Trembling to welcome it.
Notes, that with pulse of fire
Proclaim the spirit's desire,
Then die, and are nowhere:—
My song be like an air!

Die, song, die like a breath,
And wither as a bloom:
Fear not a flowery death,
Dread not an airy tomb!
Fly with delight, fly hence!
'Twas thine love's tender sense
To feast; now on thy bier
Beauty shall shed a tear.

I LOVE ALL BEAUTEOUS THINGS

(1890)

I love all beauteous things,
I seek and adore them;
God hath no better praise,
And man in his hasty days
Is honored for them.

I too will something make
And joy in the making;
Altho' to-morrow it seem
Like the empty words of a dream
Remembered on waking.

MY DELIGHT AND THY DELIGHT

(1899)

My delight and thy delight
Walking, like two angels white,
In the gardens of the night:

My desire and thy desire
Twining to a tongue of fire,
Leaping live, and laughing higher;
Thro' the everlasting strife
In the mystery of life.

Love, from whom the world begun,
Hath the secret of the sun.

Love can tell, and love alone,
Whence the million stars were strewn,
Why each atom knows its own,
How, in spite of woe and death,
Gay is life, and sweet is breath:

This he taught us, this we knew,
Happy in his science true,
Hand in hand as we stood
Neath the shadows of the wood,
Heart to heart as we lay
In the dawning of the day.

PATER FILIO

(1899)

Sense with keenest edge unusèd,
Yet unsteel'd by scathing fire;
Lovely feet as yet unbruisèd
On the ways of dark desire;
Sweetest hope that lookest smiling
O'er the wilderness defiling!

Why such beauty, to be blighted
By the swarm of foul destruction?
Why such innocence delighted,
When sin stalks to thy seduction?
All the litanies e'er chaunted
Shall not keep thy faith undaunted.

I have pray'd the sainted Morning
To unclasp her hands to hold thee;
From resignful Eve's adorning
Stol'n a robe of peace to enfold thee;
With all charms of man's contriving
Arm'd thee for thy lonely striving.

Me too once unthinking Nature,
—Whence Love's timeless mockery took me,—
Fashion'd so divine a creature,
Yea, and like a beast forsook me.
I forgave, but tell the measure
Of her crime in thee, my treasure.

HENRY AUSTIN DOBSON (1840–1921)

A DEAD LETTER

(1873)

"A cœur blessé—l'ombre et le silence."
H. DE BALZAC

I

I drew it from its china tomb:—
It came out feebly scented
With some thin ghost of past perfume
That time and years had lent it.

An old, old letter,—folded still!
To read with due composure
I sought the sun-lit window-sill
Above the gray enclosure,

That, glimmering in the sultry haze,
Faint-flowered, dimly shaded,
Slumbered, like Goldsmith's Madam Blaize,
Bedizened and brocaded.

A queer old place! You'd surely say
Some tea-board garden-maker
Had planned it in Dutch William's day
To please some florist Quaker,

So trim it was. The yew-trees still,
With pious care perverted,
Grew in the same grim shapes; and still
The lipless dolphin spurted;

Still in his wonted state abode
The broken-nosed Apollo;
And still the cypress-arbor showed
The same umbrageous hollow.

Only,—as fresh young Beauty gleams
From coffee-colored laces,—
So peeped from its old-fashioned dreams
The fresher modern traces;

For idle mallet, hoop, and ball
Upon the lawn were lying,
A magazine, a tumbled shawl,
Round which the swifts were flying;

And, tossed beside the Guelder rose,
A heap of rainbow knitting,
Where, blinking in her pleased repose,
A Persian cat was sitting.

"A place to love in,—live,—for aye,
If we too, like Tithonus,
Could find some God to stretch the gray
Scant life the Fates have thrown us;

"But now by steam we run our race
With buttoned heart and pocket;
Our Love's a gilded, surplus grace,—
Just like an empty locket.

"'The time is out of joint.' Who will,
May strive to make it better;
For me, this warm old window-sill,
And this old dusty letter."

II

"Dear *John* (the letter ran), it can't, can't be,
For Father's gone to *Chorley Fair* with *Sam*,
And Mother's storing Apples,—*Prue* and Me
Up to our Elbows making Damson Jam:
But we shall meet before a Week is gone,—
'T is a long Lane that has no Turning,' *John!*

"Only till Sunday next, and then you'll wait
Behind the White-Thorn, by the broken Stile—
We can go round and catch them at the Gate,
All to ourselves, for nearly one long Mile;
Dear *Prue* won't look, and Father he'll go on,
And *Sam's* two Eyes are all for *Cissy*, *John!*

"John, she's so smart,—with every Ribbon new,
Flame-colored Sack, and Crimson Padesoy;
As proud as proud; and has the Vapors too,
Just like My Lady;—calls poor *Sam* a boy,
And vows no Sweet-Heart's worth the Thinking-on
Till he's past Thirty . . . I know better, *John!*

"My Dear, I don't think that I thought of much
Before we knew each other, I and you;
And now, why, *John*, your least, least Finger-touch,
Gives me enough to think a Summer through.
See, for I send you Something! There, 't is gone!
Look in this corner,—mind you find it, *John!*"

III

This was the matter of the note,—
A long-forgot deposit,
Dropped in an Indian dragon's throat,
Deep in a fragrant closet,

Piled with a dapper Dresden world,—
Beaux, beauties, prayers, and poses,—
Bronzes with squat legs undercurled,
And great jars filled with roses.

Ah, heart that wrote! Ah, lips that kissed!
You had no thought or presage
Into what keeping you dismissed
Your simple old-world message!

A reverent one. Though we to-day
Distrust beliefs and powers,
The artless, ageless things you say
Are fresh as May's own flowers,

Starring some pure primeval spring,
Ere Gold had grown despotic,—
Ere Life was yet a selfish thing,
Or Love a mere exotic.

I need not search too much to find
Whose lot it was to send it,
That feel upon me yet the kind,
Soft hand of her who penned it;

And see, through two score years of smoke,
In by-gone, quaint apparel,
Shine from yon time-black Norway oak
The face of Patience Caryl,—

The pale, smooth forehead, silver-tressed;
The gray gown, primly flowered;
The spotless, stately coif whose crest
Like Hector's horse-plume towered;

And still the sweet half-solemn look
Where some past thought was clinging,
As when one shuts a serious book
To hear the thrushes singing.

I kneel to you! Of those you were,
Whose kind old hearts grow mellow,—
Whose fair old faces grow more fair
As Point and Flanders yellow;

Whom some old store of garnered grief,
Their placid temples shading,
Crowns like a wreath of autumn leaf
With tender tints of fading.

Peace to your soul! You died unwed—
Despite this loving letter.
And what of John? The less that's said
Of John, I think, the better.

A GENTLEWOMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL

(1873)

She lived in Georgian era too.
Most women then, if bards be true,
Succumbed to Routs and Cards, or grew
Devout and acid.
But hers was neither fate. She came
Of good west-country folk, whose fame
Has faded now. For us her name
Is "Madam Placid."

Patience or Prudence,—what you will,
Some prefix faintly fragrant still
As those old musky scents that fill
Our grandams' pillows;
And for her youthful portrait take
Some long-waist child of Hudson's make,
Stiffly at ease beside a lake
With swans and willows.

I keep her later semblance placed
Beside my desk,—'t is lawned and laced,
In shadowy sanguine stipple traced
By Bartolozzi;

A placid face, in which surprise
Is seldom seen, but yet there lies

Some vestige of the laughing eyes
Of arch Piozzi.

For her e'en Time grew debonair.
He, finding cheeks unclaimed of care,
With late-delayed faint roses there,
And lingering dimples,
Had spared to touch the fair old face,
And only kissed with Vauxhall grace
The soft white hand that stroked her lace,
Or smoothed her wimples.

So left her beautiful. Her age
Was comely as her youth was sage,
And yet she once had been the rage;—
It hath been hinted,
Indeed, affirmed by one or two,
Some spark at Bath (as sparks will do)
Inscribed a song to "'Lovely Prue,"
Which Urban printed.

I know she thought; I know she felt;
Perchance could sum, I doubt she spelt,
She knew as little of the Celt
As of the Saxon;
I know she played and sang, for yet
We keep the tumble-down spinet
To which she quavered ballads set
By Arne or Jackson.

Her tastes were not refined as ours,
She liked plain food and homely flowers,
Refused to paint, kept early hours,
Went clad demurely;
Her art was sampler-work design,
Fireworks for her were "vastly fine,"
Her luxury was elder-wine,—
She loved that "purely."

She was renowned, traditions say,
For June conserves, for curds and whey,
For finest tea (she called it "tay"),
And ratafia;
She knew, for sprains, what bands to choose,
Could tell the sovereign wash to use
For freckles, and was learned in brews
As erst Medea,

Yet studied little. She would read,
On Sundays, "Pearson on the Creed,"
Though, as I think, she could not heed
His text profoundly;
Seeing she chose for her retreat
The warm west-looking window seat,
Where, if you chanced to raise your feet,
You slumbered soundly.

This, 'twixt ourselves. The dear old dame
In truth, was not so much to blame;
The excellent divine I name
Is scarcely stirring;
Her plain-song piety preferred
Pure life to precept. If she erred,
She knew her faults. Her softest word
Was for the erring.

If she had loved, or if she kept
Some ancient memory green, or wept
Over the shoulder-knot that slept
Within her cuff-box,
I know not. Only this I know,
At Sixty-five she'd still her beau,
A lean French exile, lame and slow,
With monstrous snuff-box,

Younger than she, well-born and bred,
She'd found him in St. Giles', half dead
Of teaching French for nightly bed
And daily dinners;
Starving, in fact, 'twixt want and pride;
And so, henceforth, you always spied
His rusty "pigeon-wings" beside
Her Mechlin pinners.

He worshipped her, you may suppose.
She gained him pupils, gave him clothes,
Delighted in his dry bon-mots
And cackling laughter;
And when, at last, the long duet
Of conversation and picquet
Ceased with her death, of sheer regret
He died soon after.

Dear Madam Placid! Others knew
Your worth as well as he, and threw
Their flowers upon your coffin too,
I take for granted.
Their loves are lost; but still we see
Your kind and gracious memory
Bloom yearly with the almond tree
The Frenchman planted.

TU QUOQUE

AN IDYLL IN THE CONSERVATORY

(1873)

"—romprons-nous,
Ou ne romprons-nous pas?"
—Le Dépit Amoureux

NELLIE

If I were you, when ladies at the play, sir,

Beckon and nod, a melodrama through,
I would not turn abstractedly away, sir,
If I were you!

FRANK

If I were you, when persons I affected,
Wait for three hours to take me down to Kew,
I would, at least, pretend I recollected,
If I were you!

NELLIE

If I were you, when ladies are so lavish,
Sir, as to keep me every waltz but two,
I would not dance with *odious* Miss M'Tavish,
If I were you!

FRANK

If I were you, who vow you cannot suffer
Whiff of the best,—the mildest "honey-dew,"
I would not dance with smoke-consuming Puffer,
If I were you!

NELLIE

If I were you, I would not, sir, be bitter,
Even to write the "Cynical Review";—

FRANK

No, I should doubtless find flirtation fitter,
If I were you?

NELLIE

Really! You would? Why, Frank, you're quite delightful,—
Hot as Othello, and as black of hue;
Borrow my fan. I would not look so *frightful*,
If I were you!

FRANK

"It is the cause." I mean your chaperon is
Bringing some well-curled juvenile. Adieu!
I shall retire. I'd spare that poor Adonis,
If I were you!

NELLIE

Go, if you will. At once! And by express, sir!
Where shall it be? To China—or Peru?
Go. I should leave inquirers my address, sir!
If I were you!

FRANK

No,—I remain. To stay and fight a duel
Seems, on the whole, the proper thing to do—
Ah, you are strong,—I would not then be cruel,
If I were you!

NELLIE

One does not like one's feelings to be doubted,—

FRANK

One does not like one's friends to misconstrue,—

NELLIE

If I confess that I a wee-bit pouted?—

FRANK

I should admit that I was *piqué*, too.

NELLIE

Ask me to dance. I'd say no more about it,
If I were you!

[Waltz-*Exeunt*]

A DIALOGUE FROM PLATO

(1878)

"Le temps le mieux employé est celui qu'on perd."

CLAUDE TILLIER.

I'd "read" three hours. Both notes and text
Were fast a mist becoming;
In bounced a vagrant bee, perplexed,
And filled the room with humming,

Then out. The casement's leafage sways,
And, parted light, discloses
Miss Di., with hat and book,—a maze
Of muslin mixed with roses.

"You're reading Greek?" "I am—and you?"
"O mine's a mere romancer!"
"So Plato is." "Then read him—do;
And I'll read mine in answer."

I read. "My Plato (Plato, too,—
That wisdom thus should harden!)
Declares 'blue eyes look doubly blue
Beneath a Dolly Varden.'"

She smiled. "My book in turn avers
(No author's name is stated)
That sometimes those Philosophers
Are sadly mis-translated."

"'But here,—the next's in stronger style:
The Cynic School asserted
That two red lips which part and smile
May not be controverted!"

She smiled once more—"My book, I find,
Observes some modern doctors
Would make the Cynics out a kind
Of album-verse concoctors."

Then I—"Why not? 'Ephesian law,
No less than time's tradition,
Enjoined fair speech on all who saw
Diana's apparition.'"

She blushed—this time. "If Plato's page
No wiser precept teaches,
Then I'd renounce that doubtful sage,
And walk to Burnham-beeches."

"Agreed," I said. "For Socrates
(I find he too is talking)
Thinks Learning can't remain at ease
While Beauty goes a-walking."

She read no more. I leapt the sill:
The sequel's scarce essential —
Nay, more than this, I hold it still
Profoundly confidential.

THE IDYLL OF THE CARP

(1877)

(The Scene is in a garden,—where you please,
So that it lie in France, and have withal
Its gray-stoned pond beneath the arching trees,
And Triton huge, with moss for coronal.
A Princess,—feeding Fish. To her Denise.)

The Princess

These, Denise, are my Suitors!

Denise

Where?

The Princess

These fish.
I feed them daily here at morn and night
With crumbs of favor,—scraps of graciousness,
Not meant, indeed, to mean the thing they wish,
But serving just to edge an appetite.
(*Throwing bread*)
Make haste, *Messieurs!* Make haste, then! Hurry! See,—
See how they swim! Would you not say, confess,
Some crowd of Courtiers in the audience hall,
When the King comes?

Denise

You're jesting!

The Princess

Not at all.
Watch but the great one yonder! There's the duke;—
Those gill-marks mean his Order of St. Luke;
Those old skin-stains his boasted quarterings.
Look what a swirl and roll of tide he brings;
Have you not marked him thus, with crest in air,
Breathing disdain, descend the palace-stair?
You surely have, Denise.

Denise

I think I have.
But there's another, older and more grave,—

The one that wears the round patch on the throat
And swims with such slow fins. Is he of note?

THE PRINCESS

Why that's my good *chambellan*—with his seal.
A kind old man!—he carves me orange-peel
In quaint devices at refection-hours,
Equips my sweet-pouch, brings me morning flowers
Or chirrups madrigals with old, sweet words,
Such as men loved when people wooed like birds
And spoke the true note first. No suitor he,
Yet loves me too,—though in a graybeard's key.

DENISE

Look, Madam, look!—a fish without a stain!
O speckless, fleckless fish! Who is it pray,
That bears him so discreetly?

THE PRINCESS

FONTENAY.
You know him not? My prince of shining locks!
My pearl!—my Phoenix!—my pomander-box!
He loves not Me, alas! The man's too vain!
He loves his doublet better than my suit,—
His graces than my favors. Still his sash
Sits not amiss, and he can touch the lute
Not wholly out of tune—

DENISE

Ai! what a splash!
Who is it comes with such a sudden dash
Plump i' the midst, and leaps the others clear?

THE PRINCESS

Ho! for a trumpet! Let the bells be rung!
Baron of *Sans-terre,* Lord of *Prés-en-Cieux,*
Vidame of *Vol-au-Vent*—"*et aultres lieux!*"
Bah! How I hate his Gasconading tongue!
Why, that's my bragging Bravo-Musketeer—
My carpet cut-throat, valiant by a scar
Got in a brawl that stands for Spanish war:—
His very life's a splash!

DENISE

I'd rather wear
E'en such a patched and melancholy air,
As his,—that motley one,—who keeps the wall,
And hugs his own lean thoughts for carnival.

THE PRINCESS

My frankest wooer! Thus *his* love he tells
To mournful moving of his cap and bells.
He loves me (so he saith) as Slaves the Free,—
As Cowards War,—as young Maids Constancy.
Item, he loves me as the Hawk the Dove;
He loves me as the Inquisition Thought;—

DENISE

"He loves?—he loves?" Why all this loving's naught!

THE PRINCESS

And "naught (quoth JACQUOT) makes the sum of Love!"

DENISE

The cynic knave! How call you this one here?—
This small shy-looking fish, that hovers near,
And circles, like a cat around a cage,
To snatch the surplus.

THE PRINCESS

CHÉRUBIN, the page.
'T is but a child, yet with that roguish smile,
And those sly looks, the child will make hearts ache

Not five years hence, I prophesy. Meanwhile
He lives to plague the swans upon the lake,
To steal my comfits, and the monkey's cake.

DENISE

And these—that swim aside—who may these be?

THE PRINCESS

Those—are two gentlemen of Picardy,
Equal in blood,—of equal bravery:—
D'AURELLES and MAUFRIGNAC. They hunt in pair;
I mete them morsels with an equal care,
Lest they should eat each other,—or eat Me.

DENISE

And that—and that—and that?

THE PRINCESS

I name them not.
Those are the crowd who merely think their lot
The lighter by my land.

DENISE

And is there none
More prized than most? There surely must be one,—
A Carp of carps!

THE PRINCESS

Ah me!—he will not come!
He swims at large,—looks shyly on—is dumb.
Sometimes, indeed, I think he fain would nibble,
But while he stays with doubts and fears to quibble,
Some gilded fop, or mincing courtier-fribble,
Slips smartly in,—and gets the proffered crumb.
He should have all my crumbs—if he'd but ask;
Nay, an he would, it were no hopeless task
To gain a something more. But though he's brave,
He's far too proud to be a dangling slave;
And then—he's modest! So he will not come!

THE CHILD-MUSICIAN

(1877)

He had played for his lordship's levee,
He had played for her ladyship's whim,
Till the poor little head was heavy,
And the poor little brain would swim.

And the face grew peaked and eerie,
And the large eyes strange and bright,
And they said—too late—"He is weary!
He shall rest for, at least, To-night!"

But at dawn, when the birds were waking,
As they watched in the silent room,
With the sound of a strained cord breaking,
A something snapped in the gloom.

'Twas a string of his violoncello,
And they heard him stir in his bed:—
"Make room for a tired little fellow,
Kind God!—" was the last that he said.

THE CRADLE

(1877)

How steadfastly she'd worked at it!
How lovingly had drest
With all her would-be-mother's wit
That little rosy nest!

How longingly she'd hung on it!—
It sometimes seemed, she said,
There lay beneath its coverlet
A little sleeping head.

He came at last, the tiny guest,
Ere bleak December fled;
That rosy nest he never prest . . .
Her coffin was his bed.

THE BALLAD À-LA-MODE

(1877)

"Tout vient à point à qui peut attendre."

SCENE—*A Boudoir Louis-Quinze, painted with Cupids shooting at Butterflies*

THE COUNTESS. THE BARON (*her cousin and suitor*)

THE COUNTESS (*looking up from her work*)

Baron, you doze.

THE BARON (*closing his book*)

I, Madame? No.
I wait your order—Stay or Go.

THE COUNTESS

Which means, I think, that Go or Stay
Affects you nothing, either way.

THE BARON

Excuse me,—By your favor graced
My inclinations are effaced.

THE COUNTESS

Or much the same. How keen you grow,
You must be reading MARIVAUX.

THE BARON

Nay,—'twas a song of SAINTE-AULAIRE.

THE COUNTESS

Then read me one. We've time to spare:
If I can catch the clock-face there,
'T is barely eight.

THE BARON

What shall it be,—
A tale of woe, or perfidy?

THE COUNTESS

Not woes, I beg. I doubt your woes:
But perfidy, of course, one knows.

THE BARON (*reads*)

"Ah, Phillis! cruel Phillis!
(I heard a Shepherd say,)
You hold me with your Eyes, and yet
You bid me—Go my way!

"Ah, Colin! foolish Colin!
(The Maiden answered so,)
If that be All, the Ill is small,
I close them—You may go!

"But when her Eyes she opened,
(Although the Sun it shone,)
She found the Shepherd had not stirred—
'Because the Light was gone!'

"Ah, Cupid! wanton Cupid!
'Twas ever thus your way:
When Maids would bid you ply your Wings
You find Excuse to stay!"

THE COUNTESS

Famous! He earned whate'er he got:—
But there's some sequel, is there not?

THE BARON (*turning the page*)

I think not.—No. Unless 't is this:
My fate is far more hard than his;—
In fact, *your* Eyes—

THE COUNTESS

Now, that's a breach!
Your bond is—not to make a speech.
And we must start—so call JUSTINE.
I know exactly what you mean!—
Give me your arm—

THE BARON

If, in return,
Countess, I could your hand but earn!

THE COUNTESS

I thought as much. This comes, you see,
Of sentiment, and Arcady,
Where vows are hung on every tree . . .

THE BARON (*offering his arm, with a low bow*)

And no one dreams—of PERFIDY.

THE SECRETS OF THE HEART

(1877)

"Le cœur mène où il va."

SCENE.—*A Chalet covered with Honeysuckle*

NINETTE NINON

NINETTE

This way—

NINON

No, this way—

NINETTE

This way, then.

(*They enter the Chalet.*)

You are as changing, Child,—as Men.

NINON

But are they? Is it true, I mean?
Who said it?

NINETTE

SISTER SÉRAPHINE.
She was so pious and so good,
With such sad eyes beneath her hood,
And such poor little feet,—all bare!
Her name was EUGÈNIE LA FÉRE.
She used to tell us,—moonlight nights,—
When I was at the Carmelites.

NINON

Ah, then it must be right. And yet,
Suppose for once—suppose, NINETTE—

NINETTE

But what?—

NINON

Suppose it were not so?
Suppose there *were* true men, you know!

NINETTE

And then?

NINON

Why,—if that could occur,
What kind of man should you prefer?

NINETTE

What looks, you mean?

NINON

Looks, voice and all.

NINETTE

Well, as to that, he must be tall,
Or say, not "tall,"—of middle size;
And next, he must have laughing eyes,
And a hook-nose,—with, underneath,
O! what a row of sparkling teeth!—

NINON (*touching her cheek suspiciously*)

Has he a scar on this side?

NINETTE

Hush!
Someone is coming. No; a thrush:
I see it swinging there.

NINON

Go on.

NINETTE

Then he must fence, (ah, look, 't is gone!)
And dance like Monseigneur, and sing
"Love was a Shepherd";—everything
That men do. 'Tell me yours, NINON.

NINON

Shall I? Then mine has black, black hair,
I mean he *should* have; then an air
Half sad, half noble; features thin;
A little *royale* on the chin;
And such a pale, high brow. And then,
He is a prince of gentlemen;—
He, too, can ride and fence, and write
Sonnets and madrigals, yet fight
No worse for that—

NINETTE

I know your man.

NINETTE

And I know yours. But you'll not tell,—
Swear it!

NINETTE

I swear upon this fan,
My Grandmother's!

NINON

And I, I swear
On this old turquoise *reliquaire*,—
My great,—*great* Grandmother's!!—

(*After a pause*)

NINETTE!

I feel *so* sad.

NINETTE

I too. But why?

NINON

Alas, I know not!

NINETTE (*with a sigh*)

Nor do I.

GOOD-NIGHT, BABETTE!

(1877)

"Si vieillesse pouvait!—"

SCENE.—*A small neat Room. In a high Voltaire chair sits a white-haired old Gentleman.*

MONSIEUR VIEUXBOIS BABETTE

M. VIEUXBOIS (*turning querulously*)

Day of my life! Where *can* she get?
BABETTE! I say! BABETTE!—BABETTE!!

BABETTE (*entering hurriedly*)

Coming, M'sieu'! If M'sieu' speaks
So loud he won't be well for weeks!

M. VIEUXBOIS

Where have you been?

BABETTE

Why M'sieu' knows:—
April! . . . Ville-d'Avray! . . . Ma'am'-'selle Rose!

M. VIEUXBOIS

Ah! I am old,—and I forget.
Was the place growing green, BABETTE?

BABETTE

But of a greenness!—yes, M'sieu'!
And then the sky so blue!—so blue!
And when I dropped my *immortelle*,
How the birds sang!
(*Lifting her apron to her eyes.*)
This poor Ma'am'selle!

M. VIEUXBOIS

You're a good girl, BABETTE, but she,—
She was an Angel, verily.
Sometimes I think I see her yet
Stand smiling by the cabinet;
And once, I know, she peeped and laughed
Betwixt the curtains . . .
Where's the draught?

(*She gives him a cup*)

Now I shall sleep, I think, BABETTE,—
Sing me your Norman *chansonnette*.

BABETTE (*sings*)

"Once at the Angelus
(Ere I was dead)
Angels all glorious
Came to my Bed;—
Angels in blue and white
Crowned on the Head."

M. VIEUXBOIS (*drowsily*)

"She was an Angel" . . . "Once she laughed" . . .
What, was I dreaming?
Where's the draught?

BABETTE (*showing the empty cup*)

The draught, M'sieu'?

M. VIEUXBOIS

How I forget!
I am so old! But sing, BABETTE!

BABETTE (*sings*)

"One was the Friend I left
Stark in the Snow;
One was the Wife that died
Long,—long ago;
One was the Love I lost . . .
How could she know?"

M. VIEUXBOIS (*murmuring*)

Ah, PAUL! . . . old PAUL! . . . EULALIE too!

And ROSE. . . . And O! "the sky so blue!"

BABETTE (*sings*)

"One had my Mother's eyes,
Wistful and mild;
One had my Father's face;
One was a child:
All of them bent to me,—
Bent down and smiled!"

(He is asleep!)

M. VIEUXBOIS (*almost inaudibly*)

"How I forget!"
"I am so old!" . . . "Good-night, BABETTE!"

ROSE-LEAVES

(1877)

(TRIOLETS)

"Sans peser.—Sans rester."

These are leaves of my rose,
Pink petals I treasure:
There is more than one knows
In these leaves of my rose;
O the joys! O the woes!
They are quite beyond measure.
These are leaves of my rose,—
Pink petals I treasure.

A KISS

Rose kissed me to-day.
Will she kiss me to-morrow?
Let it be as it may,
Rose kissed me to-day.
But the pleasure gives way
To a savor of sorrow;—
Rose kissed me to-day,—
Will she kiss me to-morrow?

CIRCE

In the School of Coquettes
Madam Rose is a scholar:—
O, they fish with all nets
In the School of Coquettes!
When her brooch she forgets
'T is to show her new collar;
In the School of Coquettes
Madam Rose is a scholar!

A TEAR

There's a tear in her eye,—
Such a clear little jewel!
What on earth makes her cry?
There's a tear in her eye.
"Puck has killed a big fly,—
And it's *horribly* cruel;"
There's a tear in her eye,—
Such a clear little jewel!

"AMARI ALIQUID"

"Will you hear 'All Alone'?"—
"No, I think I quite know it."
"But you liked it, my Own?"—
"When I *was*—'all alone'!
Now that season has flown;
And besides—*I've the Poet!*"
"Will you hear 'All Alone'?"
"No, I think I *quite* know it."

A GREEK GIFT

Here's a present for Rose,
How pleased she is looking!
Is it verse?—is it prose?
Here's a present for Rose!
"Plats," "Entrées," and *"Rôts,"*—
Why, it's "Gouffé on Cooking"!
Here's a present for Rose!
How *pleased* she is looking!

OLD LOVES

"Then, you liked little Bowes"—
"And you liked Jane Raby!"
"But you like *me* now, Rose?"
"As I liked 'little Bowes'!"
"Am I then to suppose?"—
"Hush!—you mustn't wake Baby!"
"Did you like little Bowes?"—
"If you liked Jane Raby!"

"URCEUS EXIT"

I INTENDED an Ode,
And it turned to a Sonnet.
It began *à la mode,*
I intended an Ode;
But Rose crossed the road
In her latest new bonnet;
I intended an Ode,
And it turned to a Sonnet.

ARS VICTRIX

(1877)

(IMITATED FROM THÉOPHILE GAUTIER)

Yes; when the ways oppose—
  When the hard means rebel,
Fairer the work out-grows,—
  More potent far the spell.

O Poet, then, forbear
  The loosely-sandalled verse,
Choose rather thou to wear
  The buskin—straight and terse;

Leave to the tiro's hand
  The limp and shapeless style;
See that thy form demand
  The labor of the file.

Sculptor, do thou discard
  The yielding clay,—consign
To Paros marble hard
  The beauty of thy line;—

Model thy Satyr's face
  In bronze of Syracuse;
In the veined agate trace
  The profile of thy Muse.

Painter, that still must mix
  But transient tints anew,
Thou in the furnace fix
  The firm enamel's hue;

Let the smooth tile receive
  Thy dove-drawn Erycine;
Thy Sirens blue at eve
  Coiled in a wash of wine.

All passes. ART alone
  Enduring stays to us;
The Bust out-lasts the throne, —
  The Coin, Tiberius;

Even the gods must go;
  Only the lofty Rhyme
Not countless years o'erthrow,—
  Not long array of time.

Paint, chisel, then, or write;
  But, that the work surpass,
With the hard fashion fight,—
  With the resisting mass.

ON THE HURRY OF THIS TIME

(1885)

With slower pen men used to write,
Of old, when "letters" were "polite;"
  In ANNA'S, or in GEORGE'S days,
  They could afford to turn a phrase,
Or trim a straggling theme aright.

They knew not steam; electric light
Not yet had dazed their calmer sight;—
  They meted out both blame and praise
    With slower pen.

Too swiftly now the Hours take flight!
What's read at morn is dead at night:
  Scant space have we for Art's delays,
  Whose breathless thought so briefly stays,

We may not work—ah! would we might!—
    With slower pen.

TO AN INTRUSIVE BUTTERFLY

(1885)

"Kill not—for Pity's sake—and lest ye slay
The meanest thing upon its upward way."
—Five Rules of Buddha.

I watch you through the garden walks,
  I watch you float between
The avenues of dahlia stalks,
  And flicker on the green;
You hover round the garden seat,
  You mount, you waver. Why,—
Why storm us in our still retreat,
  O saffron Butterfly!

Across the room in loops of flight
  I watch you wayward go;
Dance down a shaft of glancing light,
  Review my books a-row;
Before the bust you flaunt and flit
  Of "blind Mæonides" —
Ah, trifler, on his lips there lit
  Not butterflies, but bees!

You pause, you poise, you circle up
  Among my old Japan;
You find a comrade on a cup,
  A friend upon a fan;
You wind anon, a breathing-while,
  Around Amanda's brow;—

Dost dream her then, O Volatile!
E'en such an one as thou?

Away! Her thoughts are not as thine.
A sterner purpose fills
Her steadfast soul with deep design
Of baby bows and frills;
What care hath she for worlds without,
What heed for yellow sun,
Whose endless hopes revolve about
A planet, *ætat* One.

Away! Tempt not the best of wives;
Let not thy garish wing
Come fluttering our Autumn lives
With truant dreams of Spring!
Away! Reseek thy "Flowery Land";
Be Buddha's law obeyed;
Lest Betty's undiscerning hand
Should slay . . . a future Praed!

TO A MISSAL OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

(1885)

Missal of the Gothic age,
Missal with the blazoned page,
Whence, O Missal, hither come,
From what dim scriptorium?

Whose the name that wrought thee thus,
Ambrose or Theophilus,
Bending, through the waning light,
O'er thy vellum scraped and white;

Weaving 'twixt thy rubric lines
Sprays and leaves and quaint designs;
Setting round thy border scrolled
Buds of purple and of gold?

Ah!—a wondering brotherhood,
Doubtless, by that artist stood,
Raising o'er his careful ways
Little choruses of praise;

Glad when his deft hand would paint
Strife of Sathanas and Saint,
Or in secret coign entwist
Jest of cloister humorist.

Well the worker earned his wage,
Bending o'er the blazoned page!
Tired the hand and tired the wit
Ere the final *Explicit!*

Not as ours the books of old—
Things that steam can stamp and fold,
Not as ours the books of yore—
Rows of type, and nothing more.

Then a book was still a Book,
Where a wistful man might look,
Finding something through the whole,
Beating,—like a human soul.

In that growth of day by day,
When to labor was to pray,
Surely something vital passed
To the patient page at last;

Something that one still perceives
Vaguely present in the leaves;
Something from the worker lent;
Something mute—but eloquent!

ON A FAN THAT BELONGED TO THE MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR

(BALLADE)

(1895)

Chicken-skin, delicate, white,
Painted by Carlo Vanloo,
Loves in a riot of light,
Roses and vaporous blue:
Hark to the dainty *frou-frou!*
Picture above, if you can,
Eyes that could melt as the dew,—
This was the Pompadour's fan!

See how they rise at the sight,
Thronging the *Œil de Bœuf* through,
Courtiers as butterflies bright,
Beauties that Fragonard drew,
Talon-rouge, falbala, queue,
Cardinal, Duke,—to a man,
Eager to sigh or to sue,—
This was the Pompadour's fan!

Ah, but things more than polite
Hung on this toy, *voyez-vous!*
Matters of state and of might,
Things that great ministers do;
Things that, may be, overthrew
Those in whose brains they began;
Here was the sign and the cue,—
This was the Pompadour's fan!

ENVOY

Where are the secrets it knew?
Weavings of plot and of plan?
—But where is the Pompadour, too?
This was the Pompadour's *Fan!*

WHEN BURBADGE PLAYED

(1895)

When Burbadge played, the stage was bare
Of fount and temple, tower and stair;
  Two backswords eked a battle out;
  Two supers made a rabble rout;
The Throne of Denmark was a chair!

And yet, no less, the audience there
Thrilled through all changes of Despair,
  Hope, Anger, Fear, Delight, and Doubt
  When Burbadge played!

This is the Actor's gift; to share
All moods, all passions, nor to care
  One whit for scene, so he without
  Can lead men's minds the roundabout
Stirred as of old those hearers were
  When Burbadge played!

A DIALOGUE

TO THE MEMORY OF MR. ALEXANDER POPE

(1895)

"Non injussa cano."—VIRG.

POET. I sing of POPE—
FRIEND. What, POPE, the *Twitnam* Bard,
Whom *Dennis, Cibber, Tibbald* push'd so hard!
POPE of the *Dunciad!* POPE who dar'd to woo,
And then to libel, *Wortley-Montagu!*
POPE of the *Ham-walks* story—

P. Scandals all!
Scandals that now I care not to recall.
Surely a little, in two hundred Years,
One may neglect Contemporary Sneers:—
Surely allowance for the Man may make
That had all *Grub Street* yelping in his Wake!
And who (I ask you) has been never mean,
When urged by Envy, Anger or the Spleen?
No: I prefer to look on POPE as one
Not rightly happy till his Life was done;
Whose whole Career, romance it as you please,
Was (what he call'd it) but a "long Disease":
Think of his Lot,—his Pilgrimage of Pain,
His "crazy Carcass" and his restless Brain;
Think of his Night-Hours with their Feet of Lead,
His dreary Vigil and his aching Head;
Think of all this, and marvel then to find
The "crooked Body with a crooked Mind!"
Nay rather, marvel that, in Fate's Despite,
You find so much to solace and delight,—
So much of Courage, and of Purpose high
In that unequal Struggle *not* to die.
I grant you freely that POPE played his Part
Sometimes ignobly—but he lov'd his Art;
I grant you freely that he sought his Ends
Not always wisely—but he lov'd his Friends;
And who of Friends a nobler Roll could show—
Swift, St. John, Bathurst, Marchmont, Peterb'ro',
Arbuthnot—

FR. ATTICUS?
P. Well (*entre nous*),
Most that he said of *Addison* was *true.*
Plain Truth you know—

FR. Is often not polite
(So *Hamlet* thought)—

P. And *Hamlet* (Sir) was right.
But leave POPE's Life. To-day, methinks, we touch
The Work too little and the Man too much.
Take up the *Lock,* the *Satires, Eloïse*—
What Art supreme, what Elegance, what Ease!
How keen the Irony, the Wit how bright,
The Style how rapid, and the Verse how light!
Then read once more, and you shall wonder yet
At Skill, at Turn, at Point, at Epithet.
"True Wit is Nature to Advantage dress'd"—
Was ever Thought so pithily express'd?
"And ten low Words oft creep in one dull Line"—
Ah, what a Homily on Yours . . . and Mine!
Or take—to choose at Random—take but This—
"Ten censure wrong for one that writes amiss."

FR. Pack'd and precise, no Doubt. Yet surely those
Are but the Qualities we ask of Prose.

Was he a Poet?

P. Yes: if that be what
Byron was certainly and *Bowles* was not;
Or say you grant him, to come nearer Date,
What *Dryden* had, that was denied to *Tate*—

Fr. Which means, you claim for him the Spark divine,
Yet scarce would place him on the highest Line—

P. True, there are Classes. Pope was most of all
Akin to *Horace, Persius, Juvenal;*
Pope was, like them, the Censor of his Age,
An Age more suited to Repose than Rage;
When Rhyming turn'd from Freedom to the Schools,
And shock'd with Licence, shudder'd into Rules;
When *Phœbus* touch'd the Poet's trembling Ear
With one supreme Commandment, *Be thou Clear;*
When Thought meant less to reason than compile,
And the *Muse* labor'd . . . chiefly with the File.
Beneath full Wigs no Lyric drew its Breath
As in the Days of great Elizabeth;
And to the Bards of Anna was denied
The Note that *Wordsworth* heard on *Duddon-side.*
But Pope took up his Parable, and knit
The Woof of Wisdom with the Warp of Wit;
He trimm'd the Measure on its equal Feet,
And Smooth'd and fitted till the Line was neat;
He taught the Pause with due Effect to fall;
He taught the Epigram to come at Call;
He wrote—

Fr. His *Iliad!*

P. Well, suppose you own
You like your *Iliad* in the Prose of *Bohn,*—
Tho' if you'd learn in Prose how *Homer* sang,
'Twere best to learn of *Butcher* and of *Lang,*—
Suppose you say your Worst of Pope, declare
His Jewels Paste, his Nature a Parterre,
His Art but Artifice—I ask once more
Where have you seen such Artifice before?
Where have you seen a Parterre better grac'd,
Or gems that glitter like his Gems of Paste?
Where can you show, among your Names of Note,
So much to copy and so much to quote?
And where, in Fine, in all our English Verse,
A Style more trenchant and a Sense more terse?
So I, that love the old *Augustan* Days
Of formal Courtesies and formal Phrase;
That like along the finished Line to feel
The Ruffle's Flutter and the Flash of Steel;
That like my Couplet as compact as clear;
That like my Satire sparkling tho' severe,
Unmix'd with Bathos and unmarr'd by Trope,
I fling my Cap for Polish—and for Pope!

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON (1850–1894)

From *A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES*

(1885)

YOUNG NIGHT THOUGHT

All night long and every night,
When my mama puts out the light,
I see the people marching by,
As plain as day, before my eye.

Armies and emperors and kings,
All carrying different kinds of things,
And marching in so grand a way,
You never saw the like by day.

So fine a show was never seen
At the great circus on the green;
For every kind of beast and man
Is marching in that caravan.

At first they move a little slow,
But still the faster on they go,
And still beside them close I keep
Until we reach the Town of Sleep.

FOREIGN LANDS

Up into the cherry tree
Who should climb but little me?
I held the trunk with both my hands
And looked abroad on foreign lands.

I saw the next door garden lie,
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,
And many pleasant places more
That I had never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass
And be the sky's blue looking-glass;
The dusty roads go up and down
With people tramping into town.

If I could find a higher tree
Farther and farther I should see,
To where the grown-up river slips
Into the sea among the ships,

To where the roads on either hand
Lead onward into fairy land,
Where all the children dine at five,
And all the playthings come alive.

TRAVEL

I should like to rise and go
Where the golden apples grow;—
Where below another sky
Parrot islands anchored lie,
And, watched by cockatoos and goats,
Lonely Crusoes building boats;—
Where in sunshine reaching out
Eastern cities, miles about,
Are with mosque and minaret
Among sandy gardens set,
And the rich goods from near and far
Hang for sale in the bazaar;—
Where the Great Wall round China goes,
And on one side the desert blows,
And with bell and voice and drum,
Cities on the other hum;—
Where are forests, hot as fire,
Wide as England, tall as a spire,
Full of apes and cocoa-nuts
And the negro hunters' huts;—
Where the knotty crocodile
Lies and blinks in the Nile,
And the red flamingo flies
Hunting fish before his eyes;—
Where in jungles, near and far,
Man-devouring tigers are,
Lying close and giving ear
Lest the hunt be drawing near,
Or a comer-by be seen
Swinging in a palanquin;—
Where among the desert sands
Some deserted city stands,
All its children, sweep and prince,
Grown to manhood ages since,
Not a foot in street or house,
Not a stir of child or mouse,
And when kindly falls the night,
In all the town no spark of light.
There I'll come when I'm a man
With a camel caravan;
Light a fire in the gloom
Of some dusty dining room;
See the pictures on the walls,
Heroes, fights and festivals;
And in a corner find the toys
Of the old Egyptian boys.

THE LAND OF NOD

From breakfast on through all the day
At home among my friends I stay,
But every night I go abroad
Afar into the Land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,
With none to tell me what to do—
All alone beside the streams
And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

The strangest things are there for me,
Both things to eat and things to see,
And many frightening sights abroad
Till morning in the Land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,
I never can get back by day,
Nor can remember plain and clear
The curious music that I hear.

THE COW

The friendly cow all red and white,
  I love with all my heart:
She gives me cream with all her might
  To eat with apple-tart.

She wanders lowing here and there,
  And yet she cannot stray,
All in the pleasant open air,
  The pleasant light of day;

And blown by all the winds that pass
  And wet with all the showers,
She walks among the meadow grass
  And eats the meadow flowers.

THE WIND

I saw you toss the kites on high
And blow the birds about the sky;
And all around I heard you pass,
Like ladies' skirts across the grass—
O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

I saw the different things you did,
But always you yourself you hid.
I felt you push, I heard you call,
I could not see yourself at all—
O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

O you that are so strong and cold,
O blower, are you young or old?
Are you a beast of field and tree,
Or just a stronger child than me?
O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

TIME TO RISE

A birdie with a yellow bill
Hopped upon the window-sill,
Cocked his shining eye and said:
"Ain't you 'shamed, you sleepy-head!"

THE LAND OF STORY-BOOKS

At evening when the lamp is lit,
Around the fire my parents sit;
They sit at home and talk and sing,
And do not play at anything.

Now, with my little gun, I crawl
All in the dark along the wall,
And follow round the forest track
Away behind the sofa back.

There, in the night, where none can spy,
All in my hunter's camp I lie,
And play at books that I have read
Till it is time to go to bed.

These are the hills, these are the woods,
These are my starry solitudes;
And there the river by whose brink
The roaring lions come to drink.

I see the others far away
As if in firelit camp they lay,
And I, like to an Indian scout,
Around their party prowled about.

So, when my nurse comes in for me,
Home I return across the sea,
And go to bed with backward looks
At my dear Land of Story-books.

THE LITTLE LAND

When at home alone I sit
And am very tired of it,
I have just to shut my eyes
To go sailing through the skies—
To go sailing far away
To the pleasant Land of Play;
To the fairy land afar
Where the Little People are;
Where the clover-tops are trees,
And the rain-pools are the seas,
And the leaves like little ships
Sail about on tiny trips;
And above the daisy tree
Through the grasses,
High o'erhead the Bumble Bee
Hums and passes.

In that forest to and fro
I can wander, I can go;
See the spider and the fly,
And the ants go marching by
Carrying parcels with their feet
Down the green and grassy street.
I can in the sorrel sit
Where the ladybird alit.
I can climb the jointed grass;
And on high
See the greater swallows pass
In the sky,
And the round sun rolling by
Heeding no such things as I.

Through that forest I can pass
Till, as in a looking-glass,
Humming fly and daisy tree
And my tiny self I see,
Painted very clear and neat
On the rain-pool at my feet.
Should a leaflet come to land
Drifting near to where I stand,
Straight I'll board that tiny boat
Round the rain-pool sea to float.

Little thoughtful creatures sit
On the grassy coasts of it;
Little things with lovely eyes
See me sailing with surprise.
Some are clad in armor green—
(These have sure to battle been!)—
Some are pied with ev'ry hue,

Black and crimson, gold and blue;
Some have wings and swift are gone;—
But they all look kindly on.
When my eyes I once again
Open, and see all things plain:
High bare walls, great bare floor;
Great big knobs on drawer and door;
Great big people perched on chairs,
Stitching tucks and mending tears,
Each a hill that I could climb,
And talking nonsense all the time—
O dear me,
That I could be
A sailor on the rain-pool sea,
A climber in the clover tree,
And just come back, a sleepy-head,
Late at night to go to bed.

NEST EGGS

Birds all the sunny day
Flutter and quarrel
Here in the arbor-like
Tent of the laurel.

Here in the fork
The brown nest is seated;
Four little blue eggs
The mother keeps heated.

While we stand watching her,
Staring like gabies,
Safe in each egg are the
Bird's little babies.

Soon the frail eggs they shall
Chip, and upspringing,
Make all the April woods
Merry with singing.

Younger than we are,
O children, and frailer,
Soon in blue air they'll be,
Singer and sailor.

We, so much older,
Taller and stronger,
We shall look down on the
Birdies no longer.

They shall go flying
With musical speeches
High overhead in the
Tops of the beeches.

In spite of our wisdom
And sensible talking,
We on our feet must go
Plodding and walking.

TO ANY READER

As from the house your mother sees
You playing round the garden trees,
So you may see, if you will look
Through the windows of this book,
Another child, far, far away,
And in another garden, play.
But do not think you can at all,
By knocking on the window, call
That child to hear you. He intent
Is all on his play-business bent.
He does not hear; he will not look,
Nor yet be lured out of this book.
For, long ago, the truth to say,
He has grown up and gone away,
And it is but a child of air
That lingers in the garden there.

From *UNDERWOODS*

(1887)

REQUIEM

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

THE CELESTIAL SURGEON

If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning face;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; if morning skies,
Books, and my food, and summer rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain:—
Lord, Thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake;
Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
Choose Thou, before that spirit die,

A piercing pain, a killing sin,
And to my dead heart run them in!

IN THE STATES

With half a heart I wander here
  As from an age gone by,
A brother—yet though young in years,
  An elder brother, I.

You speak another tongue than mine,
  Though both were English born.
I towards the night of time decline,
  You mount into the morn.

Youth shall grow great and strong and free,
  But age must still decay:
To-morrow for the States—for me,
  England and Yesterday.

IN THE HIGHLANDS

In the highlands, in the country places,
Where the old plain men have rosy faces,
And the young fair maidens
Quiet eyes;
Where essential silence cheers and blesses,
And for ever in the hill-recesses
Her more lovely music
Broods and dies.

O to mount again where erst I haunted;
Where the old red hills are bird-enchanted,
And the low green meadows
Bright with sward;
And when even dies, the million-tinted,
And the night has come, and planets glinted,
Lo! the valley hollow,
Lamp-bestarred.

O to dream, O to awake and wander
There, and with delight to take and render,
Through the trance of silence,
Quiet breath;
Lo! for there, among the flowers and grasses,
Only the mightier movement sounds and passes;
Only winds and rivers,
Life and death.

SING ME A SONG

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,
  Say, could that lad be I?
Merry of soul he sailed on a day
  Over the sea to Skye.

Mull was astern, Rum on the port,
  Egg on the starboard bow;
Glory of youth glowed in his soul:
  Where is that glory now?

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,
  Say, could that lad be I?
Merry of soul he sailed on a day
  Over the sea to Skye.

Give me again all that was there,
  Give me the sun that shone!
Give me the eyes, give me the soul,
  Give me the lad that's gone!

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,
  Say, could that lad be I?
Merry of soul he sailed on a day
  Over the sea to Skye.

Billow and breeze, islands and seas,
  Mountains of rain and sun,
All that was good, all that was fair,
  All that was me is gone.

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY (1849–1903)

From *IN HOSPITAL*

(*1873–1875*–1888)

I

ENTER PATIENT

The morning mists still haunt the stony street;
The northern summer air is shrill and cold;
And lo, the Hospital, grey, quiet, old,
Where Life and Death like friendly chafferers meet.
Thro' the loud spaciousness and draughty gloom
A small, strange child—so agèd yet so young!—
Her little arm besplinted and beslung,
Precedes me gravely to the waiting-room.
I limp behind, my confidence all gone.
The grey-haired soldier-porter waves me on,
And on I crawl, and still my spirits fail:
A tragic meanness seems so to environ
These corridors and stairs of stone and iron,
Cold, naked, clean—half-workhouse and half-jail.

VIII

STAFF-NURSE: OLD STYLE

The greater masters of the commonplace,
REMBRANDT and good SIR WALTER—only these
Could paint her all to you: experienced ease
And antique liveliness and ponderous grace;
The sweet old roses of her sunken face;
The depth and malice of her sly, grey eyes;
The broad Scots tongue that flatters, scolds, defies;
The thick Scots wit that fells you like a mace.
These thirty years has she been nursing here,
Some of them under SYME, her hero still.
Much is she worth, and even more is made of her.
Patients and students hold her very dear.
The doctors love her, tease her, use her skill.
They say "The Chief" himself is half-afraid of her.

XIX

SCRUBBER

She's tall and gaunt, and in her hard, sad face
With flashes of the old fun's animation
There lowers the fixed and peevish resignation
Bred of a past where troubles came apace.
She tells me that her husband, ere he died,
Saw seven of their children pass away,
And never knew the little lass at play
Out on the green, in whom he's deified.
Her kin dispersed, her friends forgot and gone,
All simple faith her honest Irish mind,
Scolding her spoiled young saint, she labors on:
Telling her dreams, taking her patients' part,
Trailing her coat sometimes: and you shall find
No rougher, quainter speech, nor kinder heart.

BALLADE

(DOUBLE REFRAIN)

OF YOUTH AND AGE

I. M.

Thomas Edward Brown

(1888)

Spring at her height on a morn at prime
Sails that laugh from a flying squall,

Pomp of harmony, rapture of rhyme—
Youth is the sign of them, one and all.
Winter sunsets and leaves that fall,
An empty flagon, a folded page,
A tumble-down wheel, a tattered ball—
These are a type of the world of Age.

Bells that clash in a gaudy chime,
Swords that clatter in onsets tall,
The words that ring and the fames that climb—
Youth is the sign of them, one and all.
Hymnals old in a dusty stall,
A bald, blind bird in a crazy cage,
The scene of a faded festival—
These are a type of the world of Age.

Hours that strut as the heirs of time,
Deeds whose rumor's a clarion-call,
Songs where the singers their souls sublime—
Youth is the sign of them, one and all.
A staff that rests in a nook of wall,
A reeling battle, a rusted gage,
The chant of a nearing funeral—
These are a type of the world of Age.

ENVOY

Struggle and turmoil, revel and brawl—
Youth is the sign of them, one and all.
A smouldering hearth and a silent stage—
These are a type of the world of Age.

BALLADE

OF DEAD ACTORS

I. M.

Edward John Henley (1861–1898)

(1888)

Where are the passions they essayed,
And where the tears they made to flow?
Where the wild humors they portrayed
For laughing worlds to see and know?
Othello's wrath and Juliet's woe?
Sir Peter's whims and Timon's gall?
And Millamant and Romeo?
Into the night go one and all.

Where are the braveries, fresh or frayed?
The plumes, the armors—friend and foe?
The cloth of gold, the rare brocade,
The mantles glittering to and fro?
The pomp, the pride, the royal show?
The cries of war and festival?
The youth, the grace, the charm, the glow?
Into the night go one and all.

The curtain falls, the play is played:
The Beggar packs beside the Beau;
The Monarch troops, and troops the Maid;
The Thunder huddles with the Snow.
Where are the revellers high and low?
The clashing swords? The lover's call?
The dancers gleaming row on row?
Into the night go one and all.

ENVOY

Prince, in one common overthrow
The Hero tumbles with the Thrall:
As dust that drives, as straws that blow,
Into the night go one and all.

ORIENTALE

(1888)

She's an enchanting little Israelite,
A world of hidden dimples!—Dusky-eyed,
A starry-glancing daughter of the Bride,
With hair escaped from some Arabian Night,
Her lip is red, her cheek is golden-white,
Her nose a scimitar; and, set aside
The bamboo hat she cocks with so much pride,
Her dress a dream of daintiness and delight.
And when she passes with the dreadful boys
And romping girls, the cockneys loud and crude,
My thought, to the Minories tied yet moved to range
The Land o' the Sun, commingles with the noise
Of magian drums and scents of sandal-wood
A touch Sidonian—modern—taking—strange!

WHEN YOU ARE OLD

(1888)

When you are old, and I am passed away—
Passed, and your face, your golden face, is gray—

I think, whate'er the end, this dream of mine,
Comforting you, a friendly star will shine
Down the dim slope where still you stumble and stray.
So may it be: that so dead Yesterday,
No sad-eyed ghost but generous and gay,
May serve you memories like almighty wine,
When you are old!

Dear Heart, it shall be so. Under the sway
Of death the past's enormous disarray
Lies hushed and dark. Yet though there come no sign,
Live on well pleased: immortal and divine
Love shall still tend you, as God's angels may,
When you are old.

BESIDE THE IDLE SUMMER SEA

(1888)

Beside the idle summer sea
And in the vacant summer days,
Light Love came fluting down the ways,
Where you were loitering with me.

Who has not welcomed, even as we,
That jocund minstrel and his lays
Beside the idle summer sea
And in the vacant summer days?

We listened, we were fancy-free;
And lo! in terror and amaze
We stood alone—alone at gaze
With an implacable memory
Beside the idle summer sea.

WE SHALL SURELY DIE

(1888)

We shall surely die:
Must we needs grow old?
Grow old and cold,
And we know not why?

O, the By-and-Bye,
And the tale that's told!
We shall surely die:
Must we needs grow old?

Grow old and sigh,
Grudge and withhold,
Resent and scold? . . .
Not you and I?
We shall surely die!

WHAT IS TO COME WE KNOW NOT

(1888)

What is to come we know not. But we know
That what has been was good—was good to show,
Better to hide, and best of all to bear.
We are the masters of the days that were:
We have lived, we have loved, we have suffered . . . even so.

Shall we not take the ebb who have the flow?
Life was our friend. Now, if it be our foe—
Dear, though it spoil and break us!—need we care
What is to come?

Let the great winds their worst and wildest blow,
Or the gold weather round us mellow slow:
We have fulfilled ourselves, and we can dare
And we can conquer, though we may not share
In the rich quiet of the afterglow
What is to come.

TO MY MOTHER

(*1872*–1888)

Chiming a dream by the way
With ocean's rapture and roar,
I met a maiden to-day
Walking alone on the shore:
Walking in maiden wise,
Modest and kind and fair,
The freshness of spring in her eyes
And the fulness of spring in her hair.

Cloud-shadow and scudding sun-burst
Were swift on the floor of the sea,
And a mad wind was romping its worst,
But what was their magic to me?
Or the charm of the midsummer skies?
I only saw she was there,
A dream of the sea in her eyes
And the kiss of the sea in her hair.

I watched her vanish in space;
She came where I walked no more;
But something had passed of her grace
To the spell of the wave and the shore;
And now, as the glad stars rise,
She comes to me, rosy and rare,
The delight of the wind in her eyes
And the hand of the wind in her hair.

LIFE IS BITTER

(*1872*–1888)

II

Life is bitter. All the faces of the years,
Young and old, are gray with travail and with tears.
Must we only wake to toil, to tire, to weep?
In the sun, among the leaves, upon the flowers,
Slumber stills to dreamy death the heavy hours . . .
Let me sleep.

Riches won but mock the old, unable years;
Fame's a pearl that hides beneath a sea of tears;
Love must wither, or must live alone and weep.
In the sunshine, through the leaves, across the flowers,
While we slumber, death approaches through the hours . . .
Let me sleep.

I. M.

R. T. HAMILTON BRUCE

(*1875*–1888)

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

I AM THE REAPER

(*1875*–1888)

V

I am the Reaper.
All things with heedful hook
Silent I gather.
Pale roses touched with the spring,
Tall corn in summer,
Fruits rich with autumn, and frail winter blossoms—
Reaping, still reaping—
All things with heedful hook
Timely I gather.

I am the Sower.
All the unbodied life
Runs through my seed-sheet.
Atom with atom wed,
Each quickening the other,
Fall through my hands, ever changing, still changeless
Ceaselessly sowing,
Life, incorruptible life,
Flows from my seed-sheet.

Maker and breaker,
I am the ebb and the flood,
Here and Hereafter,
Sped through the tangle and coil
Of infinite nature,
Viewless and soundless I fashion all being.
Taker and giver,
I am the womb and the grave,
The Now and the Ever.

THE SANDS ARE ALIVE

(*1875*–1888)

The sands are alive with sunshine,
The bathers lounge and throng,
And out in the bay a bugle
Is lilting a gallant song.

The clouds go racing eastward,
The blithe wind cannot rest,

And a shard on the shingle flashes
  Like the shining soul of a jest;

While children romp in the surges,
  And sweethearts wander free,
And the Firth as with laughter dimples . . .
  I would it were deep over me!

To A. D.

(*1876*–1888)

The nightingale has a lyre of gold,
  The lark's is a clarion call,
And the blackbird plays but a boxwood flute,
  But I love him best of all.

For his song is all of the joy of life,
  And we in the mad, spring weather,
We two have listened till he sang
  Our hearts and lips together.

To R. L. S.

(*1876*–1888)

A child,
Curious and innocent,
Slips from his Nurse, and rejoicing
Loses himself in the Fair.

Thro' the jostle and din
Wandering, he revels,
Dreaming, desiring, possessing;
Till, of a sudden
Tired and afraid, he beholds
The sordid assemblage
Just as it is; and he runs
With a sob to his Nurse
(Lighting at last on him),
And in her motherly bosom
Cries him to sleep.

Thus thro' the World,
Seeing and feeling and knowing,
Goes Man: till at last,
Tired of experience, he turns
To the friendly and comforting breast
Of the old nurse, Death.

THE WAYS ARE GREEN

(*1878*–1888)

The ways are green with the gladdening sheen
  Of the young year's fairest daughter.
O, the shadows that fleet o'er the springing wheat!
  O, the magic of running water!
The spirit of spring is in every thing,
  The banners of spring are streaming,
We march to a tune from the fifes of June,
  And life's a dream worth dreaming.

It's all very well to sit and spell
  At the lesson there's no gainsaying;
But what the deuce are want and use
  When the whole mad world's a-maying?
When the meadow glows, and the orchard snows,
  And the air's with love-motes teeming,
When fancies break, and the senses wake,
  O, life's a dream worth dreaming!

What Nature has writ with her lusty wit
  Is worded so wisely and kindly
That whoever has dipped in her manuscript
  Must up and follow her blindly.
Now the summer prime is her blithest rhyme
  In the being and the seeming,
And they that have heard the overword
  Know life's a dream worth dreaming.

To K. de M.

Love blows as the wind blows,
Love blows into the heart.—

Nile Boat-Song

(*1878*–1888)

Life in her creaking shoes
Goes, and more formal grows,
A round of calls and cues:
Love blows as the wind blows.
Blows! . . . in the quiet close
As in the roaring mart,
By ways no mortal knows
Love blows into the heart.

The stars some cadence use,
Forthright the river flows,
In order fall the dews,
Love blows as the wind blows:
Blows! . . . and what reckoning shows
The courses of his chart?
A spirit that comes and goes,
Love blows into the heart.

I. M.

MARGARITÆ SORORI

(*1886*–1888)

A late lark twitters from the quiet skies;
And from the west,
Where the sun, his day's work ended,
Lingers as in content,
There falls on the old, grey city
An influence luminous and serene,
A shining peace.

The smoke ascends
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires
Shine, and are changed. In the valley
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,
Closing his benediction,
Sinks, and the darkening air
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night—
Night with her train of stars
And her great gift of sleep.

So be my passing!
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,
The sundown splendid and serene,
Death.

To W. A.

(1888)

Or ever the knightly years were gone
With the old world to the grave,
I was a King in Babylon
And you were a Christian Slave.

I saw, I took, I cast you by,
I bent and broke your pride.
You loved me well, or I heard them lie,
But your longing was denied.
Surely I knew that by and by
You cursed your gods and died.

And a myriad suns have set and shone
Since then upon the grave
Decreed by the King of Babylon
To her that had been his Slave.

The pride I trampled is now my scathe,
For it tramples me again.
The old resentment lasts like death,
For you love, yet you refrain.
I break my heart on your hard unfaith,
And I break my heart in vain.

Yet not for an hour do I wish undone
The deed beyond the grave,
When I was a King in Babylon
And you were a Virgin Slave.

From "LONDON VOLUNTARIES"

(*1890*–1892)

NO. I. *Grave*

St. Margaret's bells,
Quiring their innocent, old-world canticles,
Sing in the storied air,
All rosy-and-golden, as with memories
Of woods at evensong, and sands and seas
Disconsolate for that the night is nigh.
O, the low, lingering lights! The large last gleam
(Hark! how those brazen choristers cry and call!)
Touching these solemn ancientries, and there,
The silent River ranging tide-mark high
And the callow, grey-faced Hospital,
With the strange glimmer and glamour of a dream!
The Sabbath peace is in the slumbrous trees,
And from the wistful, the fast-widowing sky
(Hark! how those plangent comforters call and cry!)
Falls as in August plots late roseleaves fall.
The sober Sabbath stir—
Leisurely voices, desultory feet!—
Comes from the dry, dust-colored street,
Where in their summer frocks the girls go by,
And sweethearts lean and loiter and confer,
Just as they did an hundred years ago,
Just as an hundred years to come they will:—
When you and I, Dear Love, lie lost and low,
And sweet-throats none our welkin shall fulfil,
Nor any sunset fade serene and slow;
But, being dead, we shall not grieve to die.

NO. II. *Andante con moto*

Forth from the dust and din,
The crush, the heat, the many-spotted glare,
The odor and sense of life and lust aflare,
The wrangle and jangle of unrests,
Let us take horse, Dear Heart, take horse and win—
As from swart August to the green lap of May—
To quietness and the fresh and fragrant breasts
Of the still, delicious night, not yet aware
In any of her innumerable nests
Of that first sudden plash of dawn,
Clear, sapphirine, luminous, large,
Which tells that soon the flowing springs of day
In deep and ever deeper eddies drawn
Forward and up, in wider and wider way,
Shall float the sands, and brim the shores,
On this our lith of the World, as round it roars
And spins into the outlook of the Sun
(The Lord's first gift, the Lord's especial charge),
With light, with living light, from marge to marge
Until the course He set and staked be run.

Through street and square, through square and street,
Each with his home-grown quality of dark
And violated silence, loud and fleet,
Waylaid by a merry ghost at every lamp,
The hansom wheels and plunges. Hark, O, hark,
Sweet, how the old mare's bit and chain
Ring back a rough refrain
Upon the marked and cheerful tramp
Of her four shoes! Here is the Park,
And O, the languid midsummer wafts adust,
The tired midsummer blooms!
O, the mysterious distances, the glooms
Romantic, the august
And solemn shapes! At night this City of Trees
Turns to a tryst of vague and strange
And monstrous Majesties,
Let loose from some dim underworld to range
These terrene vistas till their twilight sets;
When, dispossessed of wonderfulness, they stand
Beggared and common, plain to all the land
For stooks of leaves! And lo! the Wizard Hour,
His silent, shining sorcery winged with power!
Still, still the streets, between their carcanets
Of linking gold, are avenues of sleep.
But see how gable ends and parapets
In gradual beauty and significance
Emerge! And did you hear
That little twitter-and-cheep,
Breaking inordinately loud and clear
On this still, spectral, exquisite atmosphere?
'Tis a first nest at matins! And behold
A rakehell cat—how furtive and acold!
A spent witch homing from some infamous dance—
Obscene, quick-trotting, see her tip and fade
Through shadowy railings into a pit of shade!
And now! a little wind and shy,
The smell of ships (that earnest of romance),
A sense of space and water, and thereby
A lamplit bridge touching the troubled sky,
And look, O, look! a tangle of silver gleams
And dusky lights, our River and all his dreams,
His dreams that never save in our deaths can die.

What miracle is happening in the air,
Charging the very texture of the gray
With something luminous and rare?
The night goes out like an ill-parcelled fire,
And, as one lights a candle, it is day.
The extinguisher, that perks it like a spire
On the little formal church, is not yet green
Across the water: but the house-tops nigher,
The corner-lines, the chimneys—look how clean,
How new, how naked! See the batch of boats,
Here at the stairs, washed in the fresh-sprung beam!

And those are barges that were goblin floats,
Black, hag-steered, fraught with devilry and dream!
And in the piles the water frólics clear,
The ripples into loose rings wander and flee,
And we—we can behold that could but hear
The ancient River singing as he goes,
New-mailed in morning to the ancient Sea.
The gas burns lank and jaded in its glass:
The old Ruffian soon shall yawn himself awake,
And light his pipe, and shoulder his tools, and take
His hobnailed way to work!

Let us too pass—
Pass ere the sun leaps and your shadow shows—
Through these long, blindfold rows
Of casements staring blind to right and left,
Each with his gaze turned inward on some piece
Of life in death's own likeness—Life bereft
Of living looks as by the Great Release—
Pass to an exquisite night's more exquisite close!

Reach upon reach of burial—so they feel,
These colonies of dreams! And as we steal
Homeward together, but for the buxom breeze,
Fitfully frolicking to heel
With news of dawn-drenched woods and tumbling seas,
We might—thus awed, thus lonely that we are—
Be wandering some dispeopled star,
Some world of memories and unbroken graves,
So broods the abounding Silence near and far:
Till even your footfall craves
Forgiveness of the majesty it braves.

NO. III. *Scherzando*

Down through the ancient Strand
The spirit of October, mild and boon
And sauntering, takes his way
This golden end of afternoon,
As though the corn stood yellow in all the land,
And the ripe apples dropped to the harvest-moon.

Lo! the round sun, half-down the western slope—
Seen as along an unglazed telescope—
Lingers and lolls, loth to be done with day:
Gifting the long, lean, lanky street
And its abounding confluences of being
With aspects generous and bland;
Making a thousand harnesses to shine
As with new ore from some enchanted mine,
And every horse's coat so full of sheen
He looks new-tailored, and every 'bus feels clean,
And never a hansom but is worth the feeing;
And every jeweller within the pale
Offers a real Arabian Night for sale;
And even the roar
Of the strong streams of toil, that pause and pour
Eastward and westward, sounds suffused—
Seems as it were bemused
And blurred, and like the speech
Of lazy seas on a lotus-haunted beach—
With this enchanted lustrousness,
This mellow magic, that (as a man's caress
Brings back to some faded face, beloved before,
A heavenly shadow of the grace it wore
Ere the poor eyes were minded to beseech)
Old things transfigures, and you hail and bless
Their looks of long-lapsed loveliness once more:
Till Clement's, angular and cold and staid,
Gleams forth in glamour's very stuffs arrayed;
And Bride's, her aëry, unsubstantial charm
Through flight on flight of springing, soaring stone
Grown flushed and warm,
Laughs into life full-mooded and fresh-blown;
And the high majesty of Paul's
Uplifts a voice of living light, and calls—
Calls to his millions to behold and see
How goodly this his London Town can be!

For earth and sky and air
Are golden everywhere,
And golden with a gold so suave and fine
The looking on it lifts the heart like wine.
Trafalgar Square
(The fountains volleying golden glaze)
Shines like an angel-market. High aloft
Over his couchant Lions, in a haze
Shimmering and bland and soft,
A dust of chrysoprase,
Our Sailor takes the golden gaze
Of the saluting sun, and flames superb,
As once he flamed it on his ocean round.
The dingy dreariness of the picture-place,
Turned very nearly bright,
Takes on a luminous transiency of grace,
And shows no more a scandal to the ground.
The very blind man pottering on the kerb
Among the posies and the ostrich feathers
And the rude voices touched with all the weathers
Of the long, varying year,
Shares in the universal alms of light.
The windows, with their fleeting, flickering fires,
The height and spread of frontage shining sheer,
The quiring signs, the rejoicing roofs and spires—
'Tis El Dorado—El Dorado plain,
The Golden City! And when a girl goes by,
Look! as she turns her glancing head,
A call of gold is floated from her ear!
Golden, all golden! In a golden glory,
Long-lapsing down a golden coasted sky,
The day not dies, but seems
Dispersed in wafts and drifts of gold, and shed
Upon a past of golden song and story
And memories of gold and golden dreams.

AS LIKE THE WOMAN AS YOU CAN

(1892)

"As like the Woman as you can"—
(*Thus the New Adam was beguiled*)—
"So shall you touch the Perfect Man"—
(*God in the Garden heard and smiled*).
"Your father perished with his day:
A clot of passions fierce and blind,
He fought, he hacked, he crushed his way:
Your muscles, Child, must be of mind.

"The Brute that lurks and irks within,
How, till you have him gagged and bound,
Escape the foulest form of Sin?"
(*God in the Garden laughed and frowned*).
"So vile, so rank, the bestial mood
In which the race is bid to be.
It wrecks the Rarer Womanhood:
Live, therefore, you, for Purity!

"Take for your mate no gallant croup,
No girl all grace and natural will:
To work her mission were to stoop,
Maybe to lapse, from Well to Ill.
Choose one of whom your grosser make"—
(*God in the Garden laughed outright*)—
"The true refining touch may take,
Till both attain to Life's last height.

"There, equal, purged of soul and sense,
Beneficent, high-thinking, just,
Beyond the appeal of Violence,
Incapable of common Lust,
In mental Marriage still prevail"—
(*God in the Garden hid His face*)—
"Till you achieve that Female-male
In Which shall culminate the race."

MIDSUMMER MIDNIGHT SKIES

(1892)

Midsummer midnight skies,
Midsummer midnight influences and airs,
The shining, sensitive silver of the sea
Touched with the strange-hued blazonings of dawn;
And all so solemnly still I seem to hear
The breathing of Life and Death,
The secular Accomplices,
Renewing the visible miracle of the world.

The wistful stars
Shine like good memories. The young morning wind
Blows full of unforgotten hours
As over a region of roses. Life and Death
Sound on—sound on. . . . And the night magical,
Troubled yet comforting, thrills
As if the Enchanted Castle at the heart
Of the wood's dark wonderment
Swung wide his valves, and filled the dim sea-banks
With exquisite visitants:

Words fiery-hearted yet, dreams and desires
With living looks intolerable, regrets
Whose voice comes as the voice of an only child
Heard from the grave: shapes of a Might-Have-Been—
Beautiful, miserable, distraught —
The Law no man may baffle denied and slew.

The spell-bound ships stand as at gaze
To let the marvel by. The grey road glooms. . . .
Glimmers . . . goes out . . . and there, O there where it fades,
What grace, what glamour, what wild will,
Transfigure the shadows? Whose,
Heart of my heart, Soul of my soul, but yours?

Ghosts—ghosts—the sapphirine air
Teems with them even to the gleaming ends
Of the wild day-spring! Ghosts,
Everywhere—everywhere—till I and you
At last—dear love, at last!—
Are in the dreaming, even as Life and Death
Twin-ministers of the unoriginal Will.

UNDER A STAGNANT SKY

(To James McNeill Whistler)

(1892)

Under a stagnant sky,
Gloom out of gloom uncoiling into gloom,
The River, jaded and forlorn,
Welters and wanders wearily—wretchedly —on;
Yet in and out among the ribs
Of the old skeleton bridge as in the piles
Of some dead lake-built city, full of skulls,
Worm-worn, rat-riddled, mouldy with memories,
Lingers to babble to a broken tune
(Once, O, the unvoiced music of my heart!)
So melancholy a soliloquy
It sounds as it might tell
The secret of the unending grief-in-grain,
The terror of Time and Change and Death,
That wastes this floating, transitory world.
What of the incantation
That forced the huddled shapes on yonder shore
To take and wear the night
Like a material majesty?
That touched the shafts of wavering fire
About this miserable welter and wash—
(River, O River of Journeys, River of Dreams!)
Into long, shining signals from the panes
Of an enchanted pleasure-house,
Where life and life might live life lost in life
For ever and evermore?

O Death! O Change! O Time!
Without you, O, the insufferable eyes
Of these poor Might-Have-Beens,
These fatuous, ineffectual Yesterdays!

FRESH FROM HIS FASTNESSES

(1892)

Fresh from his fastnesses
Wholesome and spacious,
The North Wind, the mad huntsman,
Halloas on his white hounds
Over the grey, roaring
Reaches and ridges,
The forest of ocean,
The chace of the world.
Hark to the peal
Of the pack in full cry,
As he thongs them before him,
Swarming voluminous,
Weltering, wide-wallowing,
Till in a ruining
Chaos of energy,
Hurled on their quarry,
They crash into foam!

Old Indefatigable,
Time's right-hand man, the sea
Laughs as in joy
From his millions of wrinkles:
Laughs that his destiny,
Great with the greatness
Of triumphing order,
Shows as a dwarf
By the strength of his heart
And the might of his hands.

Master of masters,
O maker of heroes,
Thunder the brave,
Irresistible message:—

"Life is worth Living
Through every grain of it,
From the foundations
To the last edge
Of the cornerstone, death."

SPACE AND DREAD AND THE DARK

(1892)

Space and dread and the dark—
Over a livid stretch of sky
Cloud-monsters crawling, like a funeral train
Of huge, primeval presences
Stooping beneath the weight
Of some enormous, rudimentary grief;
While in the haunting loneliness
The far sea waits and wanders with a sound
As of the trailing skirts of Destiny,
Passing unseen
To some immitigable end
With her grey henchman, Death.

What larve, what spectre is this
Thrilling the wilderness to life
As with the bodily shape of Fear?
What but a desperate sense,
A strong foreboding of those dim
Interminable continents, forlorn
And many-silenced, in a dusk
Inviolable utterly, and dead
As the poor dead it huddles and swarms and styes
In hugger-mugger through eternity?
Life—life—let there be life!
Better a thousand times the roaring hours
When wave and wind,
Like the Arch-Murderer in flight
From the Avenger at his heel,
Storms through the desolate fastnesses
And wild waste places of the world!

Life—give me life until the end,
That at the very top of being,
The battle-spirit shouting in my blood,
Out of the reddest hell of the fight
I may be snatched and flung
Into the everlasting lull,
The immortal, incommunicable dream.

FRANCIS THOMPSON (1859–1907)

DAISY

(1893)

Where the thistle lifts a purple crown
Six foot out of the turf,
And the harebell shakes on the windy hill—
O the breath of the distant surf!—

The hills look over on the South,
And southward dreams the sea;
And, with the sea-breeze hand in hand,
Came innocence and she.

Where 'mid the gorse the raspberry
Red for the gatherer springs,
Two children did we stray and talk
Wise, idle, childish things.

She listened with big-lipped surprise,
Breast-deep 'mid flower and spine:
Her skin was like a grape, whose veins
Run snow instead of wine.

She knew not those sweet words she spake,
Nor knew her own sweet way;
But there's never a bird so sweet a song
Thronged in whose throat that day!

Oh, there were flowers in Storrington
On the turf and on the spray;
But the sweetest flower on Sussex hills
Was the Daisy-flower that day!

Her beauty smoothed earth's furrowed face!
She gave me tokens three:—
A look, a word of her winsome mouth,
And a wild raspberry.

A berry red, a guileless look,
A still word,—strings of sand!
And yet they made my wild, wild heart
Fly down to her little hand.

For, standing artless as the air,
And candid as the skies,
She took the berries with her hand,
And the love with her sweet eyes.

The fairest things have fleetest end:
Their scent survives their close,

But the rose's scent is bitterness
To him that loved the rose!

She looked a little wistfully,
Then went her sunshine way:—
The sea's eye had a mist on it,
And the leaves fell from the day.

She went her unremembering way,
She went, and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone,
And partings yet to be.

She left me marvelling why my soul
Was sad that she was glad;
At all the sadness in the sweet,
The sweetness in the sad.

Still, still I seemed to see her, still
Look up with soft replies,
And take the berries with her hand,
And the love with her lovely eyes.

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in others' pain,
And perish in our own.

THE POPPY

TO MONICA

(1893)

Summer set lip to earth's bosom bare,
And left the flushed print in a poppy there:
Like a yawn of fire from the grass it came,
And the fanning wind puffed it to flapping flame.

With burnt mouth, red like a lion's, it drank
The blood of the sun as he slaughtered sank,
And dipped its cup in the purpurate shine
When the eastern conduits ran with wine;

Till it grew lethargied with fierce bliss,
And hot as a swinkèd gipsy is,
And drowsed in sleepy savageries,
With mouth wide a-pout for a sultry kiss.

A child and man paced side by side,
Treading the skirts of eventide;
But between the clasp of his hand and hers
Lay, felt not, twenty withered years.

She turned, with the rout of her dusk South hair,
And saw the sleeping gipsy there;
And snatched and snapped it in swift child's whim,
With—"keep it, long as you live!"—to him.

And his smile, as nymphs from their laving meres,
Trembled up from a bath of tears;
And joy, like a mew sea-rocked apart,
Tossed on the wave of his troubled heart.

For *he* saw what she did not see,
That—as kindled by its own fervency—
The verge shrivelled inward smoulderingly:

And suddenly 'twixt his hand and hers
He knew the twenty withered years—
No flower, but twenty shrivelled years.

"Was never such thing until this hour,"
Low to his heart he said; "the flower
Of sleep brings wakening to me,
And of oblivion, memory.

"Was never this thing to me," he said,
"Though with bruisèd poppies my feet are red!"
And again to his own heart very low:
"O child! I love, for I love and know;

"But you, who love nor know at all
The diverse chambers in Love's guest-hall,
Where some rise early, few sit long:
In how differing accents hear the throng
His great Pentecostal tongue;

"Who know not love from amity,
Nor my reported self from me;
A fair fit gift is this, meseems,
You give—this withering flower of dreams.

"O frankly fickle, and fickly true,
Do you know what the days will do to you?
To your Love and you what the days will do,
O frankly fickle, and fickly true?

"You have loved me, Fair, three lives—or days:
'Twill pass with the passing of my face.
But where *I* go, your face goes too,
To watch lest I play false to you.

"I am but, my sweet, your foster-lover,
Knowing well when certain years are over
You vanish from me to another;
Yet I know, and love, like the foster-mother.

"So frankly fickle, and fickly true!
For my brief life-while I take from you
This token, fair and fit, meseems,
For me—this withering flower of dreams."

The sleep-flower sways in the wheat its head,
Heavy with dreams, as that with bread:
The goodly grain and the sun-flushed sleeper
The reaper reaps, and Time the reaper.

I hang 'mid men my needless head,
And my fruit is dreams as theirs is bread:
The goodly men and the sun-hazed sleeper
Time shall reap; but after the reaper
The world shall glean of me, me the sleeper!

Love, love! your flower of withered dream
In leavèd rhyme lies safe, I deem,
Sheltered and shut in a nook of rhyme,
From the reaper man, and his reaper Time.

Love! I fall into the claws of Time:
But lasts within a leavèd rhyme
All that the world of me esteems—
My withered dreams, my withered dreams.

THE MAKING OF VIOLA

(1893)

I

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Spin, daughter Mary, spin,
Twirl your wheel with silver din;
Spin, daughter Mary, spin,
Spin a tress for Viola.

ANGELS

Spin, Queen Mary, a
Brown tress for Viola!

II

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Weave, hands angelical,
Weave a woof of flesh to pall—
Weave, hands angelical—
Flesh to pall our Viola.

ANGELS

Weave, singing brothers, a
Velvet flesh for Viola!

III

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Scoop, young Jesus, for her eyes,
Wood-browned pools of Paradise—
Young Jesus, for the eyes,
For the eyes of Viola.

ANGELS

Tint, Prince Jesus, a
Duskèd eye for Viola!

IV

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Cast a star therein to drown,
Like a torch in cavern brown,
Sink a burning star to drown
Whelmed in eyes of Viola.

ANGELS

Lave, Prince Jesus, a
Star in eyes of Viola!

V

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Breathe, Lord Paraclete,
To a bubbled crystal meet—
Breathe, Lord Paraclete—
Crystal soul for Viola.

ANGELS

Breathe, Regal Spirit, a
Flashing soul for Viola!

VI

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Child-angels, from your wings
Fall the roseal hoverings,
Child-angels, from your wings
On the cheeks of Viola.

ANGELS

Linger, rosy reflex, a
Quenchless stain, on Viola!

VII

ALL THINGS BEING ACCOMPLISHED, SAITH THE FATHER OF HEAVEN:

Bear her down, and bearing, sing,
Bear her down on spyless wing,
Bear her down, and bearing, sing,
With a sound of viola.

ANGELS

Music as her name is, a
Sweet sound of Viola!

VIII

Wheeling angels, past espial,
Danced her down with sound of viol;
Wheeling angels, past espial,
Descanting on "Viola."

ANGELS

Sing, in our footing, a
Lovely lilt of "Viola!"

IX

Baby smiled, mother wailed,
Earthward while the sweetling sailed;
Mother smiled, baby wailed,
When to earth came Viola.

AND HER ELDERS SHALL SAY:

So soon have we taught you a
Way to weep, poor Viola!

X

Smile, sweet baby, smile,
For you will have weeping-while;
Native in your Heaven is smile,—
But your weeping, Viola?

Whence your smiles, we know, but ah!
Whence your weeping, Viola?—
Our first gift to you is a
Gift of tears, my Viola!

SCALA JACOBI PORTAQUE EBURNEA

(1893)

Her soul from earth to Heaven lies,
Like the ladder of the vision,
Whereon go
To and fro,
In ascension and demission,
Star-flecked feet of Paradise.

Now she is drawn up from me,
All my angels, wet-eyed, tristful,
Gaze from great
Heaven's gate
Like pent children, very wistful,
That below a playmate see.

Dream-dispensing face of hers!
Ivory port which loosed upon me
Wings, I wist,
Whose amethyst
Trepidations have forgone me,—
Hesper's filmy traffickers!

BEFORE HER PORTRAIT IN YOUTH

(1893)

As lovers, banished from their lady's face,
And hopeless of her grace,
Fashion a ghostly sweetness in its place,
Fondly adore
Some stealth-won cast attire she wore,
A kerchief, or a glove:
And at the lover's beck
Into the glove there fleets the hand,
Or at impetuous command
Up from the kerchief floats the virgin neck:

So I, in very lowlihead of love,—
Too shyly reverencing
To let one thought's light footfall smooth
Tread near the living, consecrated thing,—
Treasure me thy cast youth.
This outworn vesture tenantless of thee,
Hath yet my knee,
For that, with show and semblance fair
Of the past Her
Who once the beautiful, discarded raiment bare,
It cheateth me.

As gale to gale drifts breath
Of blossoms' death,
So dropping down the years from hour to hour
This dead youth's scent is wafted me to-day:
I sit, and from the fragrance dream the flower.
So, then, she looked (I say);
And so her front sank down
Heavy beneath the poet's iron crown:
On her mouth museful sweet—
(Even as the twin lips meet)
Did thought and sadness greet:
Sighs
In those mournful eyes
So put on visibilities;
As viewless ether turns, in deep on deep, to dyes.
Thus, long ago,
She kept her meditative paces slow
Through maiden meads, with wavèd shadow and gleam
Of locks half-lifted on the winds of dream,
Till love up-caught her to his chariot's glow.
Yet, voluntary, happier Proserpine,
This drooping flower of youth thou lettest fall
I, faring in the cockshut-light, astray,
Find on my 'lated way,
And stoop, and gather for memorial,
And lay it on my bosom, and make it mine.
To this, the all of love the stars allow me,
I dedicate and vow me.
I reach back through the days
A trothed hand to the dead the last trump shall not raise.
The water-wraith that cries
From those eternal sorrows of thy pictured eyes
Entwines and draws me down their soundless intricacies!

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

(1893)

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter,
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities;
(For, though I knew His love Who followèd,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside);
But, if one little casement parted wide,
The gust of His approach would clash it to.
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Across the margent of the world I fled,
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their clangèd bars;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.
I said to dawn, Be sudden; to eve, Be soon;
With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover!
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!
I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet: —
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.

Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid;
But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies;
They at least are for me, surely for me!
I turned me to them very wistfully;
But, just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.
"Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share
With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship;
Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with you caresses,
Wantoning
With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,
Banqueting
With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azured daïs,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
From a chalice
Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."
So it was done:
I in their delicate fellowship was one—
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.
I knew all the swift importings
On the wilful face of skies;
I knew how the clouds arise
Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings;
All that's born or dies
Rose and drooped with—made them shapers
Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine—
With them joyed and was bereaven.
I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glimmering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities.
I laughed in the morning's eyes.
I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;
Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
I laid my own to beat,
And share commingling heat;
But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.
In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
For ah! we know not what each other says,
These things and I; in sound *I* speak—
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
Let her, if she would owe me,
Drop you blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness:
Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.
Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
And past those noisèd Feet
A voice comes yet more fleet—
"Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not me."

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenceless utterly.
I slept, methinks, and woke,
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.
In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years—
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.
Yea, faileth now even dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.
Ah! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?
Ah! must—
Designer infinite—

Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?
My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever
From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.
Such is; what is to be?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly wash again.
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
Thee harvest, must Thy harvest fields
Be dunged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:
"And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!
Strange, piteous, futile thing,
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught"
(He said),
"And human love needs human meriting:
How hast thou merited—
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

TO THE DEAD CARDINAL OF WESTMINSTER

[*Henry Edward Manning, Died January,* 1892.]

(1893)

I will not perturbate
Thy Paradisal state
With praise
Of thy dead days;

To the new-heavened say,—
"Spirit, thou wert fine clay":
This do,
Thy praise who knew.

Therefore my spirit clings
Heaven's porter by the wings,
And holds
Its gated golds

Apart, with thee to press
A private business;—
Whence,
Deign me audience.

Anchorite, who didst dwell
With all the world for cell,
My soul
Round me doth roll

A sequestration bare.
Too far alike we were,
Too far
Dissimilar.

For its burning fruitage I
Do climb the tree o' the sky;
Do prize
Some human eyes.

You smelt the Heaven-blossoms,
And all the sweet embosoms
The dear
Uranian year.

Those Eyes my weak gaze shuns,
Which to the suns are Suns,

Did
Not affray your lid.

The carpet was let down
(With golden moultings strown)
For you
Of the angels' blue.

But I, ex-Paradised,
The shoulder of your Christ
Find high
To lean thereby.

So flaps my helpless sail,
Bellying with neither gale,
Of Heaven
Nor Orcus even.

Life is coquetry
Of Death, which wearies me,
Too sure
Of the *amour;*

A tiring-room where I
Death's divers garments try,
Till fit
Some fashion sit.

It seemeth me too much
I do rehearse for such
A mean
And single scene.

The sandy glass hence bear—
Antique remembrancer;
My veins
Do spare its pains.

With secret sympathy
My thoughts repeat in me
Infirm
The turn o' the worm

Beneath my appointed sod;
The grave is in my blood;
I shake
To winds that take

Its grasses by the top;
The rains thereon that drop
Perturb
With drip acerb

My subtly answering soul;
The feet across its knoll
Do jar
Me from afar.

As sap foretastes the spring;
As Earth ere blossoming
Thrills
With far daffodils,

And feels her breast turn sweet
With the unconceivèd wheat;
So doth
My flesh foreloathe

The abhorrèd spring of Dis,
With seething presciences
Affirm
The preparate worm.

I have no thought that I,
When at the last I die,
Shall reach
To gain your speech.

But you, should that be so,
May very well, I know,
May well
To me in hell

With recognising eyes
Look from your Paradise—
"God bless
Thy hopelessness!"

Call, holy soul, O call
The hosts angelical,
And say,—
"See, far away

"Lies one I saw on earth;
One stricken from his birth
With curse
Of destinate verse.

"What place doth He ye serve
For such sad spirit reserve,—
Given,
In dark lieu of Heaven,

"The impitiable Dæmon,
Beauty, to adore and dream on,
To be
Perpetually

"Hers, but she never his?
He reapeth miseries;
Foreknows
His wages woes;

"He lives detachèd days;
He serveth not for praise;

For gold
He is not sold;

"Deaf is he to world's tongue;
He scorneth for his song
The loud
Shouts of the crowd;

"He asketh not world's eyes;
Not to world's ears he cries;
Saith,—'These
Shut, if you please';

"He measureth world's pleasure
World's ease, as Saints might measure;
For hire
Just love entire

"He asks, not grudging pain;
And knows his asking vain,
And cries—
'Love! Love!' and dies,

"In guerdon of long duty,
Unowned by Love or Beauty;
And goes—
Tell, tell who knows!

"Aliens from Heaven's worth,
Fine beasts who nose i' the earth,
Do there
Reward prepare.

'But are *his* great desires
Food but for nether fires?
Ah me,
A mystery!

"Can it be his alone,
To find, when all is known,
That what
He solely sought

"Is lost, and thereto lost
All that its seeking cost?
That he
Must finally,

"Through sacrificial tears
And anchoretic years,
Tryst
With the sensualist?"

So ask; and if they tell
The secret terrible,
Good friend,
I pray thee send
Some high gold embassage
To teach my unripe age.
Tell!
Lest my feet walk hell.

A FALLEN YEW

(1893)

It seemed corrival of the world's great prime,
Made to un-edge the scythe of Time,
And last with stateliest rhyme.

No tender Dryad ever did indue
That rigid chiton of rough yew,
To fret her white flesh through:

But some god like to those grim Asgard lords,
Who walk the fables of the hordes
From Scandinavian fjords,

Upheaved its stubborn girth, and raised unriven,
Against the whirl-blast and the levin,
Defiant arms to Heaven.

When doom puffed out the stars, we might have said,
It would decline its heavy head,
And see the world to bed.

For this firm yew did from the vassal leas,
And rain and air, its tributaries,
Its revenues increase,

And levy impost on the golden sun,
Take the blind years as they might run,
And no fate seek or shun.

But now our yew is strook, is fallen—yea,
Hacked like dull wood of every day
To this and that, men say.

Never!—To Hades' shadowy shipyards gone,
Dim barge of Dis, down Acheron
It drops, or Lethe wan.

Stirred by its fall—poor destined bark of Dis!—
Along my soul a bruit there is
Of echoing images,

Reverberations of mortality:
Spelt backward from its death, to me
Its life reads saddenedly.

Its breast was hollowed as the tooth of eld;
And boys, there creeping unbeheld,
A laughing moment dwelled.

Yet they, within its very heart so crept,
Reached not the heart that courage kept
With winds and years beswept.

And in its boughs did close and kindly nest
The birds, as they within its breast,
By all its leaves caressed.

But bird nor child might touch by any art
Each other's or the tree's hid heart,
A whole God's breadth apart;

The breadth of God, the breadth of death and life!
Even so, even so, in undreamed strife
With pulseless Law, the wife,—

The sweetest wife on sweetest marriage-day,—
Their souls at grapple in mid-way,
Sweet to her sweet may say:

"I take you to my inmost heart, my true!"
Ah, fool! but there is one heart you
Shall never take him to!

The hold that falls not when the town is got,
The heart's heart, whose immurèd plot
Hath keys yourself keep not!

Its ports you cannot burst—you are withstood—
For him that to your listening blood
Sends precepts as he would.

Its gates are deaf to Love, high summoner;
Yea, love's great warrant runs not there:
You are your prisoner.

Yourself are with yourself the sole consortress
In that unleaguerable fortress;
It knows you not for portress.

Its keys are at the cincture hung of God;
Its gates are trepidant to His nod;
By Him its floors are trod.

And if His feet shall rock those floors in wrath,
Or blest aspersion sleek His path,
Is only choice it hath.

Yea, in that ultimate heart's occult abode
To lie as in an oubliette of God,
Or in a bower untrod,

Built by a secret Lover for His Spouse;—
Sole choice is this your life allows,
Sad tree, whose perishing boughs
So few birds house!

From "SISTER SONGS"

[The Poet to the Child]

(1895)

And ah, we poets, I misdoubt,
Are little more than thou!
We speak a lesson taught we know not how,
And what it is that from us flows
The hearer better than the utterer knows.

Thou canst foreshape thy word;
The poet is not lord
Of the next syllable may come
With the returning pendulum;
And what he plans to-day in song,
To-morrow sings it in another tongue.
Where the last leaf fell from his bough,
He knows not if a leaf shall grow;
Where he sows he doth not reap,
He reapeth where he did not sow;
He sleeps, and dreams forsake his sleep
To meet him on his waking way.
Vision will mate him not by law and vow:
Disguised in life's most hodden-grey,
By the most beaten road of everyday
She waits him, unsuspected and unknown.
The hardest pang whereon
He lays his mutinous head may be a Jacob's stone.
In the most iron crag his foot can tread
A Dream may strew her bed,
And suddenly his limbs entwine,
And draw him down through rock as sea-nymphs might through brine.
But, unlike those feigned temptress-ladies who
In guerdon of a night the lover slew.
When the embrace has failed, the rapture fled,
Not he, not he, the wild sweet witch is dead!
And though he cherisheth

The babe most strangely born from out her death,
Some tender trick of her it hath, maybe,—
It is not she!

ODE TO THE SETTING SUN

(1897)

PRELUDE

The wailful sweetness of the violin
Floats down the hushèd waters of the wind,
The heart-strings of the throbbing harp begin
To long in aching music. Spirit-pined,

In wafts that poignant sweetness drifts, until
The wounded soul ooze sadness. The red sun,
A bubble of fire, drops slowly toward the hill,
While one bird prattles that the day is done.

O setting Sun, that as in reverent days
Sinkest in music to thy smoothèd sleep,
Discrowned of homage, though yet crowned with rays,
Hymned not at harvest more, though reapers reap:

For thee this music wakes not. O deceived,
If thou hear in these thoughtless harmonies
A pious phantom of adorings reaved,
And echo of fair ancient flatteries!

Yet, in this field where the Cross planted reigns,
I know not what strange passion bows my head
To thee, whose great command upon my veïns
Proves thee a god for me not dead, not dead!

For worship it is too incredulous,
For doubt—oh, too believing-passionate!
What wild divinity makes my heart thus
A fount of most baptismal tears?—Thy straight

Long beam lies steady on the Cross. Ah me!
What secret would thy radiant finger show?
Of thy bright mastership is this the key?
Is *this* thy secret, then? And is it woe?

Fling from thine ear the burning curls, and hark
A song thou hast not heard in Northern day;
For Rome too daring, and for Greece too dark,
Sweet with wild things that pass, that pass away!

ODE

Alpha and Omega, sadness and mirth,
The springing music, and its wasting breath—
The fairest things in life are Death and Birth,
And of these two the fairer thing is Death.
Mystical twins of Time inseparable,
The younger hath the holier array,
And hath the awfuller sway:
It is the falling star that trails the light,
It is the breaking wave that hath the might,
The passing shower that rainbows maniple.
Is it not so, O thou down-stricken Day,
That draw'st thy splendors round thee in thy fall?
High was thine Eastern pomp inaugural;
But thou dost set in statelier pageantry,
Lauded with tumults of a firmament:
Thy visible music-blasts make deaf the sky,
Thy cymbals clang to fire the Occident,
Thou dost thy dying so triumphally:
I *see* the crimson blaring of thy shawms!
Why doth those lucent palms
Strew thy feet's failing thicklier than their might,
Who dost but hood thy glorious eyes with night,
And vex the heels of all the yesterdays?
Lo! this loud, lackeying praise
Will stay behind to greet the usurping moon,
When they have cloud-barred over thee the West.
Oh, shake the bright dust from thy parting shoon!
The earth not pæans thee, nor serves thy hest;
Be godded not by Heaven! avert thy face,
And leave to blank disgrace

The oblivious world! unsceptre thee of state and place!
Ha! but bethink thee what thou gazedst on,
Ere yet the snake Decay had venomed tooth;
The name thou bar'st in those vast seasons gone—
Candid Hyperion,
Clad in the light of thine immortal youth!
Ere Dionysus bled thy vines,
Or Artemis drave her clamors through the wood,
Thou saw'st how once against Olympus' height
The brawny Titans stood,
And shook the gods' world 'bout their ears, and how
Enceladus (whom Etna cumbers now)
Shouldered me Pelion with its swinging pines,
The river unrecked, that did its broken flood
Spurt on his back: before the mountainous shock
The rankèd gods dislock,
Scared to their skies; wide o'er rout-trampled night
Flew spurned the pebbled stars: those splendors then
Had tempested on earth, star upon star
Mounded in ruin, if a longer war
Had quaked Olympus and cold-fearing men.
Then did the ample marge
And circuit of thy targe
Sullenly redden all the vaward fight,
Above the blusterous clash
Wheeled thy swung falchion's flash,
And hewed their forces into splintered flight.

Yet ere Olympus thou wast, and a god!
Though we deny thy nod,
We cannot spoil thee of thy divinity.
What know we elder than thee?
When thou didst, bursting from the great void's husk,
Leap like a lion on the throat o' the dusk;
When the angels rose-chapleted
Sang each to other,
The vaulted blaze overhead
Of their vast pinions spread,
Hailing thee brother;
How chaos rolled back from the wonder,
And the First Morn knelt down to thy visage of thunder!

Thou didst draw to thy side
Thy young Auroral bride,
And lift her veil of night and mystery;
Tellus with baby hands
Shook off her swaddling-bands,
And from the unswathèd vapors laughed to thee.
Thou twi-form deity, nurse at once and sire!
Thou genitor that all things nourishest!
The earth was suckled at thy shining breast,
And in her veins is quick thy milky fire.
Who scarfed her with the morning? and who set
Upon her brow the day-fall's carcanet?
Who queened her front with the enrondured moon?
Who dug nights' jewels from their vaulty mine
To dower her, past an eastern wizard's dreams,
When, hovering on him through his haschish-swoon,
All the rained gems of the old Tartarian line
Shiver in lustrous throbbings of tinged flame?
Whereof a moiety in the Paolis' seams
Statelily builded their Venetian name.
Thou hast enwoofèd her
An empress of the air,
And all her births are propertied by thee:
Her teeming centuries
Drew being from thine eyes:
Thou fatt'st the marrow of all quality.

Who lit the furnace of the mammoth's heart?
Who shagged him like Pilatus' ribbèd flanks?
Who raised the columned ranks
Of that old pre-diluvian forestry,
Which like a continent torn oppressed the sea,
When the ancient heavens did in rains depart,
While the high-dancèd whirls
Of the tossed scud made hiss thy drenchèd curls?
Thou rear'dst the enormous brood;
Who hast with life imbued
The lion maned in tawny majesty,
The tiger velvet-barred,
The stealthy-stepping pard,

And the lithe panther's flexous symmetry?

How came the entombèd tree a light-bearer,
Though sunk in lightless lair?
Friend of the forgers of earth,
Mate of the earthquake and thunders volcanic,
Clasped in the arms of the forces Titanic
Which rock like a cradle the girth
Of the ether-hung world;
Swart son of the swarthy mine,
When flame on the breath of his nostrils feeds
How is his countenance half-divine,
Like thee in thy sanguine weeds?
Thou gavest him his light,
Though sepultured in night
Beneath the dead bones of a perished world;
Over his prostrate form
Though cold, and heat, and storm,
The mountainous wrack of a creation hurled.

Who made the splendid rose
Saturate with purple glows;
Cupped to the marge with beauty; a perfume-press
Whence the wind vintages
Gushes of warmèd fragrance richer far
Than all the flavorous ooze of Cyprus' vats?
Lo, in yon gale which waves her green cymar,
With dusky cheeks burnt red
She sways her heavy head,
Drunk with the must of her own odorousness;
While in a moted trouble the vexed gnats
Maze, and vibrate, and tease the noontide hush.
Who girt dissolvèd lightnings in the grape?
Summered the opal with an Irised flush?
Is it not thou that dost the tulip drape,
And huest the daffodilly,
Yet who hast snowed the lily,
And her frail sister, whom the waters name,
Dost vestal-vesture 'mid the blaze of June,
Cold as the new-sprung girlhood of the moon
Ere Autumn's kiss sultry her cheek with flame?
Thou sway'st thy sceptred beam
O'er all delight and dream,
Beauty is beautiful but in thy glance:
And like a jocund maid
In garland-flowers arrayed,
Before thy ark Earth keeps her sacred dance.

And now, O shaken from thine antique throne,
And sunken from thy cœrule empery,
Now that the red glare of thy fall is blown
In smoke and flame about the windy sky,
Where are the wailing voices that should meet
From hill, stream, grove, and all of mortal shape
Who tread thy gifts, in vineyards as stray feet
Pulp the globed weight of juiced Iberia's grape?
Where is the threne o' the sea?
And why not dirges thee
The wind, that sings to himself as he makes stride
Lonely and terrible on the Andèan height?
Where is the Naiad 'mid her sworded sedge?
The Nymph wan-glimmering by her wan fount's verge?
The Dryad at timid gaze by the wood-side?
The Oread jutting light
On one up-strainèd sole from the rock-ledge?
The Nereid tip-toe on the scud o' the surge,
With whistling tresses dank athwart her face,
And all her figure poised in lithe Circean grace?
Why withers their lament?
Their tresses tear-besprent,
Have they sighed hence with trailing garment-hem?
O sweet, O sad, O fair,
I catch your flying hair,
Draw your eyes down to me, and dream on them!

A space, and they fleet from me. Must ye fade—
O old, essential candors, ye who made
The earth a living and a radiant thing—
And leave her corpse in our strained, cheated arms?

Lo ever thus, when Song with chorded charms
Draws from dull death his lost Eurydice,
Lo ever thus, even at consummating,
Even in the swooning minute that claims her his,
Even as he trembles to the impassioned kiss
Of reincarnate Beauty, his control
Clasps the cold body, and forgoes the soul!
Whatso looks lovelily
Is but the rainbow on life's weeping rain.
Why have we longings of immortal pain,
And all we long for mortal? Woe is me,
And all our chants but chaplet some decay,
As mine this vanishing—nay, vanished Day.
The low sky-line dusks to a leaden hue,
No rift disturbs the heavy shade and chill,
Save one, where the charred firmament lets through
The scorching dazzle of Heaven; 'gainst which the hill,
Out-flattened sombrely,
Stands black as life against eternity.
Against eternity?
A rifting light in me
Burns through the leaden broodings of the mind:
O blessèd Sun, thy state
Uprisen or derogate
Dafts me no more with doubt; I seek and find.

If with exultant tread
Thou foot the Eastern sea,
Or like a golden bee
Sting the West to angry red,
Thou dost image, thou dost follow
That King-Maker of Creation,
Who, ere Hellas hailed Apollo,
Gave thee, angel-god, thy station;
Thou art of Him a type memorial.
Like Him thou hang'st in dreadful pomp of blood
Upon thy Western rood;
And His stained brow did vail like thine to night,
Yet lift once more Its light,
And, risen, again departed from our ball,
But when It set on earth arose in Heaven.
Thus hath He unto death His beauty given:
And so of all which form inheriteth
The fall doth pass the rise in worth;
For birth hath in itself the germ of death,
But death hath in itself the germ of birth.
It is the falling acorn buds the tree,
The falling rain that bears the greenery,
The fern-plants moulder when the ferns arise.
For there is nothing lives but something dies,
And there is nothing dies but something lives.
Till skies be fugitives,
Till Time, the hidden root of change, up-dries,
Are Birth and Death inseparable on earth;
For they are twain yet one, and Death is Birth.

FIELD-FLOWER

A PHANTASY

(1897)

God took a fit of Paradise-wind,
A slip of cœrule weather,
A thought as simple as Himself,
And ravelled them together.
Unto His eyes He held it there,
To teach it gazing debonair
With memory of what, perdie,
A God's young innocences were.
His fingers pushed it through the sod—
It came up redolent of God,
Garrulous of the eyes of God
To all the breezes near it;
Musical of the mouth of God
To all had ears to hear it;
Mystical with the mirth of God,
That glow-like did ensphere it.
And—"Babble! babble! babble" said;
"I'll tell the whole world one day!"
There was no blossom half so glad,
Since sun of Christ's first Sunday.

A poet took a flaw of pain,
A hap of skiey pleasure,
A thought had in his cradle lain,
And mingled them in measure.
That chrism he laid upon his eyes,
And lips, and heart, for euphrasies,
That he might see, feel, sing, perdie,
The simple things that are the wise.
Beside the flower he held his ways,
And leaned him to it gaze for gaze—
He took its meaning, gaze for gaze,
As baby looks on baby;
Its meaning passed into his gaze,

Native as meaning may be;
He rose with all his shining gaze
As children's eyes at play be.
And—"Babble! babble! babble!" said;
"I'll tell the whole world one day!"
There was no poet half so glad,
Since man grew God that Sunday.

PASTORAL

(1913)

Pan-Imbued
Tempe wood,
Pretty player's sporting-place;
Tempe woods
Solitude's
Everywhere a courting-place.
Kiss me, sweet
Gipsy fleet,
Though a kissed maid hath her red;
Kisses grow—
Trust me so—
Faster than they're gatherèd!
I will flute a tune
On the pipes of ivory;
All long noon
Piping of a melody;
A merry, merry, merry, merry,
Merry, merry melody.
Dance, ho! foot it so! Feat fleets the melody!

Let the wise
Say, youth dies;—
'Tis for pleasure's mending, Sweet!
Kisses are
Costlier far,
That they have an ending, Sweet!
Half a kiss's
Dainty bliss is
From the day of kiss-no-more;
When we shall,
Roseal
Lass, do this and this no more!
And we pipe a tune
On the pipes of ivory;
All long noon
Fluting of a melody:—
A merry, merry, merry,
Merry, merry melody.
Dance, ho! trip it so! Feat fleets the melody!

My love must
Be to trust,
While you safely fold me close:
Yours will smile
A kissing-while,
For the hours I hold you close.
Maiden gold!
Clipping bold
Here the truest mintage is:
Lips will bear
But, I swear,
In the press their vintages!
I will flute a tune
On the pipes of ivory;
All long noon
Piping of a melody:—
A merry, merry, merry, merry,
Merry, merry melody.
Dance, ho! foot it so! Feat fleets the melody!

ERNEST DOWSON (1867–1900)

NUNS OF THE PERPETUAL ADORATION

(1891[1]–1896)

Calm, sad, secure; behind high convent walls,
These watch the sacred lamp, these watch and pray:
And it is one with them when evening falls,
And one with them the cold return of day.

These heed not time; their nights and days they make
Into a long, returning rosary,
Whereon their lives are threaded for Christ's sake;
Meekness and vigilance and chastity.

A vowed patrol, in silent companies,
Life-long they keep before the living Christ.
In the dim church, their prayers and penances
Are fragrant incense to the Sacrificed.

[1] In *The Century Guild Hobby Horse.*

Outside, the world is wild and passionate;
Man's weary laughter and his sick despair
Entreat at their impenetrable gate:
They heed no voices in their dream of prayer.

They saw the glory of the world displayed;
They saw the bitter of it, and the sweet;
They knew the roses of the world should fade,
And be trod under by the hurrying feet.

Therefore they rather put away desire,
And crossed their hands and came to sanctuary
And veiled their heads and put on coarse attire:
Because their comeliness was vanity.

And there they rest; they have serene insight
Of the illuminating dawn to be:
Mary's sweet Star dispels for them the night,
The proper darkness of humanity.

Calm, sad, secure; with faces worn and mild:
Surely their choice of vigil is the best?
Yea! for our roses fade, the world is wild;
But there, beside the altar, there, is rest.

AMOR PROFANUS

(1896)

Beyond the pale of memory,
In some mysterious dusky grove;
A place of shadows utterly,
Where never coos the turtle-dove,
A world forgotten of the sun:
I dreamed we met when day was done,
And marvelled at our ancient love.

Met there by chance, long kept apart,
We wandered through the darkling glades;
And that old language of the heart
We sought to speak: alas! poor shades!
Over our pallid lips had run
The waters of oblivion,
Which crowns all loves of men or maids.

In vain we stammered: from afar
Our old desire shone cold and dead:
That time was distant as a star,
When eyes were bright and lips were red.
And still we went with downcast eye
And no delight in being nigh,
Poor shadows most uncomforted.

Ah, Lalage! while life is ours,
Hoard not thy beauty rose and white,
But pluck the pretty, fleeting flowers
That deck our little path of light:
For all too soon we twain shall tread
The bitter pastures of the dead:
Estranged, sad spectres of the night.

YVONNE OF BRITTANY

(1896)

In your mother's apple orchard,
Just a year ago, last spring:
Do you remember, Yvonne!
The dear trees lavishing
Rain of their starry blossoms
To make you a coronet?
Do you ever remember, Yvonne?
As I remember yet.

In your mother's apple orchard,
When the world was left behind:
You were shy, so shy, Yvonne!
But your eyes were calm and kind.
We spoke of the apple harvest,
When the cider press is set,
And such-like trifles, Yvonne!
That doubtless you forget.

In the still, soft Breton twilight
We were silent; words were few,
Till your mother came out chiding,
For the grass was bright with dew:
But I know your heart was beating,
Like a fluttered, frightened dove.
Do you ever remember, Yvonne?
That first faint flush of love?

In the fulness of midsummer,
When the apple-bloom was shed,
Oh, brave was your surrender,
Though shy the words you said.
I was glad, so glad, Yvonne!
To have led you home at last;
Do you ever remember, Yvonne!
How swiftly the days passed?

In your mother's apple-orchard
It is grown too dark to stray,
There is none to chide you, Yvonne!
You are over far away.
There is dew on your grave grass, Yvonne!

But your feet it shall not wet:
No, you never remember, Yvonne!
And I shall soon forget.

NON SUM QUALIS ERAM BONAE SUB REGNO CYNARAE

(1891[1]–1896)

Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

All night upon mine heart I felt her warm heart beat,
Night-long within mine arms in love and sleep she lay;
Surely the kisses of her bought red mouth were sweet;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
When I awoke and found the dawn was gray:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine;
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

1 In *The Century Guild Hobby Horse.*

BEATA SOLITUDO

(1896)

What land of Silence,
Where pale stars shine
On apple-blossom
And dew-drenched vine,
Is yours and mine?

The silent valley
That we will find,
Where all the voices
Of humankind
Are left behind.

There all forgetting,
Forgotten quite,
We will repose us,
With our delight
Hid out of sight.

The world forsaken,
And out of mind
Honor and labor,
We shall not find
The stars unkind.

And men shall travail,
And laugh and weep;
But we have vistas
Of Gods asleep,
With dreams as deep.

A land of Silence,
Where pale stars shine
On apple-blossoms
And dew-drenched vine,
Be yours and mine!

GRAY NIGHTS

(1896)

A while we wandered (thus it is I dream!)
Through a long, sandy track of No Man's Land,
Where only poppies grew among the sand,
The which we, plucking, cast with scant esteem,
And ever sadlier, into the sad stream,
Which followed us, as we went, hand in hand,
Under the estrangèd stars, a road unplanned,
Seeing all things in the shadow of a dream.

And ever sadlier, as the stars expired,
We found the poppies rarer, till thine eyes
Grown all my light, to light me were too tired,
And at their darkening, that no surmise
Might haunt me of the lost days we desired,
After them all I flung those memories!

AMANTIUM IRÆ

(1896)

When this, our rose, is faded,
And these, our days, are done,
In lands profoundly shaded
From tempest and from sun:
Ah, once more come together,
Shall we forgive the past,
And safe from worldly weather
Possess our souls at last?

Or in our place of shadows
Shall still we stretch an hand
To green, remembered meadows,
Of that old pleasant land?
And vainly there foregathered,
Shall we regret the sun?
The rose of love, ungathered?
The bay, we have not won?

Ah, child! the world's dark marges
May lead to Nevermore,
The stately funeral barges
Sail for an unknown shore,
And love we vow to-morrow,
And pride we serve to-day:
What if they both should borrow
Sad hues of yesterday?

Our pride! Ah, should we miss it,
Or will it serve at last?
Our anger, if we kiss it,
Is like a sorrow past.
While roses deck the garden,
While yet the sun is high,
Doff sorry pride for pardon,
Or ever love go by.

CEASE SMILING, DEAR!

(1896)

Dum nos fata sinunt, oculos satiemus Amore.
—PROPERTIUS

Cease smiling, Dear! a little while be sad,
Here in the silence, under the wan moon;
Sweet are thine eyes, but how can I be glad,
Knowing they change so soon?

For Love's sake, Dear, be silent! Cover me
In the deep darkness of thy falling hair:
Fear is upon me and the memory
Of what is all men's share.

O could this moment be perpetuate!
Must we grow old, and leaden-eyed and gray,
And taste no more the wild and passionate
Love sorrows of to-day?

Grown old, and faded, Sweet! and past desire,
Let memory die, lest there be too much ruth,
Remembering the old, extinguished fire
Of our divine, lost youth.

O red pomegranate of thy perfect mouth!
My lips' life-fruitage, might I taste and die
Here in thy garden, where the scented south
Wind chastens agony;

Reap death from thy live lips in one long kiss,
And look my last into thine eyes and rest:
What sweets had life to me sweeter than this
Swift dying on thy breast?

Or, if that may not be, for Love's sake, Dear!
Keep silence still, and dream that we shall lie,
Red mouth to mouth, entwined, and always hear
The south wind's melody,

Here in thy garden, through the sighing boughs,
Beyond the reach of time and chance and change,
And bitter life and death, and broken vows,
That sadden and estrange.

SERAPHITA

(1896)

Come not before me now, O visionary face!
Me tempest-tost, and borne along life's passionate sea;
Troublous and dark and stormy though my passage be;
Not here and now may we commingle or embrace,
Lest the loud anguish of the waters should efface
The bright illumination of thy memory,
Which dominates the night; rest, far away from me,
In the serenity of thine abiding place!

But when the storm is highest, and the thunders blare,
And sea and sky are riven, O moon of all my night!
Stoop down but once in pity of my great despair,
And let thine hand, though over late to help, alight
But once upon my pale eyes and my drowning hair,
Before the great waves conquer in the last vain fight.

CHANSON SANS PAROLES

(1896)

In the deep violet air,
  Not a leaf is stirred;
  There is no sound heard,
But afar, the rare
  Trilled voice of a bird.

Is the wood's dim heart,
  And the fragrant pine,
  Incense, and a shrine
Of her coming? Apart,
  I wait for a sign.

What the sudden hush said,
  She will hear, and forsake,
  Swift, for my sake,
Her green, grassy bed:
  She will hear and awake!

She will hearken and glide,
  From her place of deep rest,
  Dove-eyed, with the breast
Of a dove, to my side:
  The pines bow their crest.

I wait for a sign:
  The leaves to be waved,
  The tall tree-tops laved
In a flood of sunshine,
  This world to be saved!

In the deep violet air,
  Not a leaf is stirred;
  There is no sound heard,
But afar, the rare
  Trilled voice of a bird.

THE DEAD CHILD

(1899)

Sleep on, dear, now
  The last sleep and the best,
And on thy brow,
  And on thy quiet breast
Violets I throw.

Thy scanty years
  Were mine a little while;
Life had no fears
  To trouble thy brief smile
With toil or tears.

Lie still, and be
  For evermore a child!
Not grudgingly,
  Whom life has not defiled,
I render thee.

Slumber so deep,
  No man would rashly wake;
I hardly weep,
  Fain only, for thy sake,
To share thy sleep.

Yes, to be dead,
  Dead, here with thee to-day,—
When all is said
  'Twere good by thee to lay
My weary head.

The very best!
  Ah, child so tired of play,
I stand confessed:
  I want to come thy way,
And share thy rest,

CARTHUSIANS

(1899)

Through what long heaviness, assayed in what strange fire,
Have these white monks been brought into the way of peace,
Despising the world's wisdom and the world's desire,
Which from the body of this death bring no release?

Within their austere walls no voices penetrate;
A sacred silence only, as of death, obtains;
Nothing finds entry here of loud or passionate;
This quiet is the exceeding profit of their pains.

From many lands they came, in divers fiery ways;
Each knew at last the vanity of earthly joys;
And one was crowned with thorns, and one was crowned with bays,
And each was tired at last of the world's foolish noise.

It was not theirs with Dominic to preach God's holy wrath,
They were too stern to bear sweet Francis' gentle sway;
Theirs was a higher calling and a steeper path,
To dwell alone with Christ, to meditate and pray.

A cloistered company, they are companionless,
None knoweth here the secret of his brother's heart:
They are but come together for more loneliness,
Whose bond is solitude and silence all their part.

O beatific life! Who is there shall gainsay,
Your great refusal's victory, your little loss
Deserting vanity for the more perfect way,
The sweeter service of the most dolorous Cross.

Ye shall prevail at last! Surely ye shall prevail!
Your silence and austerity shall win at last:
Desire and mirth, the world's ephemeral lights shall fail,
The sweet star of your queen is never overcast.

We fling up flowers and laugh, we laugh across the wine;
With wine we dull our souls and careful strains of art;
Our cups are polished skulls round which the roses twine:
None dares to look at Death who leers and lurks apart.

Move on, white company, whom that has not sufficed!
Our viols cease, our wine is death, our roses fail:
Pray for our heedlessness, O dwellers with the Christ!
Though the world fall apart, surely ye shall prevail.

VILLANELLE OF THE POET'S ROAD

(1899)

Wine and woman and song,
Three things garnish our way:
Yet is day over long.

Lest we do our youth wrong,
Gather them while we may:
Wine and woman and song.

Three things render us strong,
Vine leaves, kisses and bay;
Yet is day over long.

Unto us they belong,
Us the bitter and gay,
Wine and woman and song.

We, as we pass along,
Are sad that they will not stay;
Yet is day over long.

Fruits and flowers among,
What is better than they:
Wine and woman and song?
Yet is day over long.

VILLANELLE OF ACHERON

(1899)

By the pale marge of Acheron,
Methinks we shall pass restfully,
Beyond the scope of any sun.

There all men hie them one by one,
Far from the stress of earth and sea,
By the pale marge of Acheron.

'Tis well when life and love is done,
'Tis very well at last to be,
Beyond the scope of any sun.

No busy voices there shall stun
Our ears: the stream flows silently
By the pale marge of Acheron.

There is the crown of labor won,
The sleep of immortality,
Beyond the scope of any sun.

Life, of thy gifts I will have none,
My queen is that Persephone,
By the pale marge of Acheron,
Beyond the scope of any sun.

TO HIS MISTRESS

(1899)

There comes an end to summer,
To spring showers and hoar rime;
His mumming to each mummer
Has somewhere end in time,
And since life ends and laughter,
And leaves fall and tears dry,
Who shall call love immortal,
When all that is must die?

Nay, sweet, let's leave unspoken
The vows the fates gainsay,
For all vows made are broken,
We love but while we may.
Let's kiss when kissing pleases,
And part when kisses pall,
Perchance, this time to-morrow,
We shall not love at all.

You ask my love completest,
As strong next year as now,
The devil take you, sweetest,
Ere I make aught such vow.
Life is a masque that changes,
A fig for constancy!
No love at all were better,
Than love which is not free.

IN A BRETON CEMETERY

(1897[1]—1899)

They sleep well here,
These fisher-folk who passed their anxious days
In fierce Atlantic ways;
And found not there,
Beneath the long curled wave,
So quiet a grave.

And they sleep well
These peasant-folk, who told their lives away,
From day to market-day,
As one should tell,
With patient industry,
Some sad old rosary.

And now night falls,
Me, tempest-tost, and driven from pillar to post,
A poor worn ghost,
This quiet pasture calls;
And dear dead people with pale hands
Beckon me to their lands.

A LAST WORD

(1899)

Let us go hence: the night is now at hand;
The day is overworn, the birds all flown;
And we have reaped the crops the gods have sown:
Despair and death; deep darkness o'er the land,
Broods like an owl; we cannot understand
Laughter or tears, for we have only known
Surpassing vanity: vain things alone
Have driven our perverse and aimless band.

Let us go hence, somewhither strange and cold,
To Hollow Lands where just men and unjust
Find end of labor, where's rest for the old,
Freedom to all from love and fear and lust.
Twine our torn hands! O pray the earth enfold
Our life-sick hearts and turn them into dust.

1 In *The Pageant.*

ARTHUR SYMONS (1865——)

NIGHT AND WIND

(1889)

The night is light and chill,
Stars are awake in the sky,
There's a cloud over the moon;
Round the house on the hill
The wind creeps with its cry
Between a wail and a croon.

I hear the voice of the wind,
The voice of the wind in the night,
Cry and sob and weep,
As the voice of one that hath sinned
Moaning aloud in its might
In the night when he cannot sleep.

Sleep? No sleep is about.
What remembering sin
Wakes and watches apart?
The wind wails without,
And my heart is wailing within,
And the wind is the voice of my heart.

ON THE BEACH

(1892)

Night, a grey sky, a ghostly sea,
The soft beginning of the rain;
Black on the horizon, sails that wane
Into the distance mistily.

The tide is rising, I can hear
The soft roar broadening far along;
It cries and murmurs in my ear
A sleepy old forgotten song.

Softly the stealthy night descends,
The black sails fade into the sky:
Is not this, where the sea-line ends,
The shore-line of infinity?

I cannot think or dream; the grey
Unending waste of sea and night,
Dull, impotently infinite,
Blots out the very hope of day.

REQUIES

(1892)

O is it death or life
That sounds like something strangely known
In this subsiding out of strife,
This slow sea-monotone?

A sound, scarce heard through sleep,
Murmurous as the August bees
That fill the forest hollows deep
About the roots of trees.

O is it life or death,
O is it hope or memory,
That quiets all things with this breath
Of the eternal sea?

IN AN OMNIBUS

(1892)

Your smile is like a treachery,
A treachery adorable;
So smiles the siren where the sea
Sings to the unforgetting shell.

Your fleeting Leonardo face,
Parisian Monna Lisa, dreams
Elusively, but not of streams
Born in a shadow-haunted place.

Of Paris, Paris is your thought,
Of Paris robes, and when to wear
The latest bonnet you have bought
To match the marvel of your hair.

Yet that fine malice of your smile,
That faint and fluctuating glint
Between your eyelids, does it hint
Alone of matters mercantile?

Close lips that keep the secret in,
Half spoken by the stealthy eyes,
Is there indeed no word to win,
No secret, from the vague replies

Of lips and lids that feign to hide
That which they feign to render up?
Is there, in Tantalus' dim cup,
The shadow of water, nought beside?

EMMY

(1892)

Emmy's exquisite youth and her virginal air,
Eyes and teeth in the flash of a musical smile,
Come to me out of the past, and I see her there
As I saw her once for a while.

Emmy's laughter rings in my ears, as bright,
Fresh and sweet as the voice of a mountain brook,
And still I hear her telling us tales that night,
Out of Boccaccio's book.

There, in the midst of the villainous dancing-hall,
Leaning across the table, over the beer,
While the music maddened the whirling skirts of the ball,
As the midnight hour drew near,

There with the women, haggard, painted and old,
One fresh bud in a garland withered and stale,
She, with her innocent voice and her clear eyes, told
Tale after shameless tale.

And ever the witching smile, to her face beguiled,
Paused and broadened, and broke in a ripple of fun,
And the soul of a child looked out of the eyes of a child,
Or ever the tale was done.

O my child, who wronged you first, and began
First the dance of death that you dance so well?
Soul for soul: and I think the soul of a man
Shall answer for yours in hell.

IN CARNIVAL

(1892)

Out of the multitudinous hours
Of life sealed fast for us by fate
Are any hours that yet await
Our coming worthy to be ours?

Life in her motley sheds in showers
The rose of hours still delicate,
But you and I have come too late
Into the Carnival of Flowers.

For us the roses are scarce sweet,
And scarcely swift the flying feet
Where masque to masque the moments call;

All has been ours that we desired,
And now we are a little tired
Of the eternal carnival.

RENÉE

(1895)

Rain, and the night, and the old familiar door,
And the archway dim, and the roadway desolate;
Faces that pass, and faces, and more, yet more:
Renée! come, for I wait.

Pallid out of the darkness, adorably white,
Pale as the spirit of rain, with the night in her hair,
Renée undulates, shadow-like, under the light,
Into the outer air.

Mournful, beautiful, calm with that vague unrest,
Sad with that sensitive, vaguely ironical mouth:
Eyes a-flame with the loveliest, deadliest
Fire of passionate youth:

Mournful, beautiful, sister of night and rain,
Elemental, fashioned of tears and fire,
Ever desiring, ever desired in vain,
Mother of vain desire:

Renée comes to me, she the sorceress, Fate,

Subtly insensible, softly invincible, she,
Renée, who waits for another, for whom I wait,
To linger a moment with me.

SLEEPLESS NIGHT

(1897)

I cannot sleep, the slow hours steal
Lingering on a path of sighs;
All night against my sight I feel
The presence of her lips, her eyes.

Out of the empty night appear
All I have loved and feared and fled:
Those eyes that I most love and fear,
Those lips I most desire and dread.

Her eyes are strange to me, they smile
An older alien smile, not mine;
Her lips are laughing to beguile
My senses with a sorcerous wine.

Deep in the darkness of the night
She wavers to a fresh disguise;
Yet still there burns against my sight
The radiant malice of her eyes.

THE WANDERERS

(1897)

Wandering, ever wandering,
Their eyelids freshened with the wind of the sea
Blown up the cliffs at sunset, their cheeks cooled
With meditative shadows of hushed leaves
That have been drowsing in the woods all day,
And certain fires of sunrise in their eyes.

They wander, and the white roads under them
Crumble into fine dust behind their feet,
For they return not; life, a long white road,
Winds ever from the dark into the dark,
And they, as days, return not; they go on
For ever, with the travelling stars; the night
Curtains them, being wearied, and the dawn
Awakens them unwearied; they go on.
They know the winds of all the earth, they know
The dust of many highways, and the stones
Of cities set for landmarks on the road.
Theirs is the world, and all the glory of it,
Theirs, because they forego it, passing on
Into the freedom of the elements;
Wandering, ever wandering,
Because life holds not anything so good
As to be free of yesterday, and bound
Towards a new-born to-morrow; and they go
Into a world of unknown faces, where
It may be there are faces waiting them,
Faces of friendly strangers, not the long
Intolerable monotony of friends.
The joy of earth is yours, O wanderers,
The only joy of the old earth, to wake,
As each new dawn is patiently renewed,
With foreheads fresh against a fresh young sky.
To be a little further on the road,
A little nearer somewhere, some few steps
Advanced into the future, and removed
By some few counted milestones from the past;
God gives you this good gift, the only gift
That God, being repentant, has to give.

Wanderers, you have the sunrise and the stars;
And we, beneath our comfortable roofs,
Lamplight, and daily fire upon the hearth,
And four walls of a prison, and sure food.
But God has given you freedom, wanderers!

WHY?

(1897)

Why is it, since I know you now
As light as any wanton is,
And, knowing, need not wonder how
You work that wonder of your kiss,
Why is it, since I know you now,

Still, in some corner of my brain,
There clings a lost, last, lingering
Doubt of my doubts of you again,
A foolish, unforgetting thing,
Still, in some corner of my brain?

Is it because your lips are soft,
And warm your hands, and strange your eyes,

That I believe again the oft
Repeated, oft permitted lies,
Because your lips are warm and soft?

For what you are I know you now,
For what it means I know your kiss;
Yet, knowing, need one wonder how,
Beneath your kisses, how it is,
Knowing you, I believe you now?

THE RETURN

(1897)

A little hand is knocking at my heart,
And I have closed the door.
"I pray thee, for the love of God, depart:
Thou shalt come in no more."

"Open, for I am weary of the way.
The night is very black.
I have been wandering many a night and day.
Open. I have come back."

The little hand is knocking patiently;
I listen, dumb with pain.
"Wilt thou not open any more to me?
I have come back again."

"I will not open any more. Depart.
I, that once lived, am dead."
The hand that had been knocking at my heart
Was still. "And I?" she said.

There is no sound, save, in the winter air,
The sound of wind and rain.
All that I loved in all the world stands there,
And will not knock again.

THE DESTROYING ANGEL

(1897)

She wanders through the city like a troubled ghost,
And where she passes her eyes light the lingering fire
Of a consuming, void, inexorable desire;
She passes, the Destroying Angel of Love's host.
Her heart is as a little loving woman's heart,
Her hands are full of pity, and of love her eyes;
Yet at her look there withers, at her touch there dies,
The lily of peace, love's flower that life has set apart.
Alluring, pale, she passes; and to her control
The kingdoms of men's strength are given; and none can trace
In the Destroying Angel's pale alluring face
A hungering heart, a silent proud appealing soul.

THE OLD WOMEN

(1899)

They pass upon their old, tremulous feet,
Creeping with little satchels down the street,
And they remember, many years ago,
Passing that way in silks. They wander, slow
And solitary, through the city ways,
And they alone remember those old days.
Men have forgotten. In their shaking heads
A dancer of old carnivals yet treads
The measure of past waltzes, and they see
The candles lit again, the patchouli
Sweeten the air, and the warm cloud of musk
Enchant the passing of the passionate dusk.
Then you will see a light begin to creep
Under the earthen eyelids, dimmed with sleep,
And a new tremor, happy and uncouth,
Jerking about the corners of the mouth.
Then the old head drops down again, and shakes,
Muttering.
Sometimes, when the swift gaslight wakes
The dreams and fever of the sleepless town,
A shaking huddled thing in a black gown
Will steal at midnight, carrying with her
Violet little bags of lavender,
Into the tap-room full of noisy light;
Or, at the crowded earlier hour of night,
Sidle, with matches, up to some who stand
About a stage-door, and, with furtive hand,
Appealing: "I too was a dancer, when
Your fathers would have been young gentlemen!"
And sometimes, out of some lean ancient throat,
A broken voice, with here and there a note

Of unspoilt crystal, suddenly will arise
Into the night, while a cracked fiddle cries
Pantingly after; and you know she sings
The passing of light, famous, passing things.
And sometimes, in the hours past midnight, reels
Out of an alley upon staggering heels,
Or into the dark keeping of the stones
About a doorway, a vague thing of bones
And draggled hair.

And all these have been loved.
And not one ruinous body has not moved
The heart of man's desire, nor has not seemed
Immortal in the eyes of one who dreamed
The dream that men call love. This is the end
Of much fair flesh; it is for this you tend
Your delicate bodies many careful years,
To be this thing of laughter and of tears,
To be this living judgment of the dead,
An old grey woman with a shaking head.

THE UNLOVED

(1899)

These are the women whom no man has loved.
Year after year, day after day has moved
These hearts with many longings, and with tears,
And with content; they have received the years
With empty hands, expecting no good thing;
Life has passed by their doors, not entering.
In solitude, and without vain desire,
They have warmed themselves beside a lonely fire;
And, without scorn, beheld as in a glass
The blown and painted leaves of Beauty pass.
Their souls have been made fragrant with the spice
Of costly virtues lit for sacrifice;
They have accepted Life, the unpaid debt,
And looked for no vain day of reckoning.

Yet
They too in certain windless summer hours
Have felt the stir of dreams, and dreamed the powers
And the exemptions and the miracles
And the cruelty of Beauty. Citadels
Of many-walled and deeply-moated hearts
Have suddenly surrendered to the arts
Of so compelling magic; entering,
They have esteemed it but a little thing
To have won so great a conquest; and with haste
They have cast down, and utterly laid waste,
Tower upon tower, and sapped their roots with flame;
And passed on that eternity of shame
Which is the way of Beauty on the earth.
And they have shaken laughter from its mirth,
To be a sound of trumpets and of horns
Crying the battle-cry of those red morns
Against a sky of triumph.

On some nights
Of delicate Springtide, when the hesitant lights
Begin to fade, and glimmer, and grow warm,
And all the softening air is quick with storm,
And the ardors of the young year, entering in,
Flush the grey earth with buds; when the trees begin
To feel a trouble mounting from their roots,
And all their green life blossoming into shoots,
They too, in some obscure, unblossoming strife,
Have felt the stirring of the sap of life.
And they have wept, with bowed head; in the street
They hear the twittering of little feet,
The rocking of the cradles in their hearts.

This is a mood, and, as a mood, departs
With the dried tears; and they resume the tale
With the dropt stitches; these must never fail
For a dream's sake; nor, for a memory,
The telling of a patient rosary.

ROSA FLAMMEA

(1899)

Beautiful demon, O veil those eyes of fire,
Cover your breasts that are whiter than milk, and ruddy

With dewy buds of the magical rose, your body,
Veil your lips from the shining of my desire!
As a rose growing up from hell you waver before me,
Shaking an odorous breath that is fire within;
The Lord Christ may not pardon me this sweet sin,
But the scent of the rose that is rooted in hell steals o'er me.
O Lord Christ, I am lost, I am lost, I am lost!
Her eyes are as stars in a pool and their spell is on me;
She lifts her unsearchable lids, chill fire is upon me,
It shudders through every vein, and my brain is tossed
As the leaves of a tree when the wind coils under and over;
She smiles, and I hear the heart beat in my side;
She lifts her hands, and I swirl in a clutching tide;
But shall my soul not burn in flame if I love her?
She shall veil those eyes, those lips, ah! that breast.
Demon seeking my soul, I do adjure thee,
In the name of him for whose tempted sake I endure thee,
Trouble my sight no more: lost soul, be at rest!
She smiles, and the air grows into a mist of spices,
Frankincense, cinnamon, labdanum, and myrrh
Rise in sweet smoke about the feet of her
Before whom the sweets of the world are as sacrifices.

Cinnamon, frankincense, labdanum, and myrrh
Smoke in the air, the fume of them closes round me;
Help, ere the waves of the flood of odors have drowned me,
Help, ere it be too late! There has no help come,
And I feel that the rose of the pit begins to blossom
Into the likeness of a lost soul on fire,
And the soul that was mine is emptied of all but desire
Of the rose of her lips and the roses of her bosom.
Ah! she smiles the great smile, the immortal shame:
Her mouth to my mouth, though hell be the price hereafter! . . .

I hear in the whirling winds her windy laughter,
And my soul for this shall whirl in the winds of flame.

VENETIAN NIGHT

(1899)

Her eyes in the darkness shone, in the twilight shed
By the gondola bent like the darkness over her head.
Softly the gondola rocked, lights came and went;
A white glove shone as her black fan lifted and leant
Where the silk of her dress, the blue of a bittern's wing,
Rustled against my knee, and, murmuring
The sweet slow hesitant English of a child,
Her voice was articulate laughter, her soul smiled.
Softly the gondola rocked, lights came and went;
From the sleeping houses a shadow of slumber leant
Over our heads like a wing, and the dim lagoon,
Rustling with silence, slumbered under the moon.
Softly the gondola rocked, and a pale light came
Over the waters, mild as a silver flame;
She lay back, thrilling with smiles, in the twilight shed
By the gondola bent like the darkness over her head;
I saw her eyes shine subtly, then close awhile:
I remember her silence, and, in the night, her smile.

HASCHISCH

(1899)

Behind the door, beyond the light,
Who is it waits there in the night?

When he has entered he will stand,
Imposing with his silent hand
Some silent thing upon the night.

Behold the image of my fear:
O rise not, move not, come not near!
That moment, when you turned your face,
A demon seemed to leap through space;
His gesture strangled me with fear.

And yet I am the lord of all,
And this brave world magnifical,
Veiled in so variable a mist
It may be rose or amethyst,
Demands me for the lord of all!

Who said the world is but a mood
In the eternal thought of God?
I know it, real though it seem,
The phantom of a haschisch dream
In that insomnia which is God.

THE LOOM OF DREAMS

(1901)

I broider the world upon a loom,
I broider with dreams my tapestry;
Here in a little lonely room
I am master of earth and sea,
And the planets come to me.

I broider my life into the frame,
I broider my love, thread upon thread;
The world goes by with its glory and shame,
Crowns are bartered and blood is shed;
I sit and broider my dreams instead.

And the only world is the world of my dreams,
And my weaving the only happiness;
For what is the world but what it seems?
And who knows but that God, beyond our guess,
Sits weaving worlds out of loneliness.

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS (1865——)

From "THE WANDERINGS OF USHEEN"[1]

(1889)

BOOK III

Fled foam underneath us, and round us, a wandering and milky smoke,
High as the saddle girth, covering away from our glances the tide;
And those that fled, and that followed, from the foam-pale distance broke;
The immortal desire of immortals we saw in their faces, and sighed.

I mused on the chase with the Fenians, and Bran, Sgeolan, Lomair,
And never a song sang Niam, and over my finger-tips
Came now the sliding of tears and sweeping of mist-cold hair,
And now the warmth of sighs, and after the quiver of lips.

Were we days long or hours long in riding, when rolled in a grisly peace,
An isle lay level before us, with dripping hazel and oak?
And we stood on a sea's edge we saw not; for whiter than new-washed fleece
Fled foam underneath us, and round us, a wandering and milky smoke.

And we rode on the plains of the sea's edge; the sea's edge barren and grey,
Grey sand on the green of the grasses and over the dripping trees,
Dripping and doubling landward, as though they would hasten away
Like an army of old men longing for rest from the moan of the seas.

But the trees grew taller and closer, immense in their wrinkling bark;
Dropping; a murmurous dropping; old silence and that one sound;
For no live creatures lived there, no weasels moved in the dark:
Long sighs arose in our spirits, beneath us bubbled the ground.

[1] W. B. Yeats, *Early Poems and Stories.* (Copyright, 1925, by the Macmillan Company.) Reprinted by permission.

And the ears of the horse went sinking
away in the hollow night,
For, as drift from a sailor slow drowning
the gleams of the world and the sun,
Ceased on our hands and our faces, on
hazel and oak leaf, the light,
And the stars were blotted above us, and
the whole of the world was one.

Till the horse gave a whinny; for, cum-
brous with stems of the hazel and
oak,
A valley flowed down from his hoofs, and
there in the long grass lay,
Under the starlight and shadow, a mon-
strous slumbering folk,
Their naked and gleaming bodies poured
out and heaped in the way.

And by them were arrow and war-axe,
arrow and shield and blade;
And dew-blanched horns, in whose hollow
a child of three years old
Could sleep on a couch of rushes, and all
inwrought and inlaid,
And more comely than man can make
them with bronze and silver and gold.

And each of the huge white creatures was
huger than fourscore men;
The tops of their ears were feathered,
their hands were the claws of birds,
And, shaking the plumes of the grasses and
the leaves of the mural glen,
The breathing came from those bodies,
long-warless, grown whiter than
curds.

The wood was so spacious above them,
that He who had stars for His flocks
Could fondle the leaves with His fingers,
nor go from His dew-cumbered skies;
So long were they sleeping, the owls had
builded their nests in their locks,
Filling the fibrous dimness with long
generations of eyes.

And over the limbs and the valley the
slow owls wandered and came,
Now in a place of star-fire, and now in a
shadow place wide;
And the chief of the huge white creatures,
his knees in the soft star-flame,
Lay loose in a place of shadow: we drew
the reins by his side.

Golden the nails of his bird-claws, flung
loosely along the dim ground;
In one was a branch soft-shining with
bells more many than sighs
In midst of an old man's bosom; owls
ruffling and pacing around,
Sidled their bodies against him, filling the
shade with their eyes.

And my gaze was thronged with the sleep-
ers; no, not since the world began,
In realms where the handsome were many,
nor in glamours by demons flung,
Have faces alive with such beauty been
known to the salt eye of man,
Yet weary with passions that faded when
the sevenfold seas were young.

And I gazed on the bell-branch, sleep's
forebear, far sung by the Sennachies.
I saw how those slumberers, grown weary,
there camping in grasses deep,
Of wars with the wide world and pacing
the shores of the wandering seas,
Laid hands on the bell-branch and swayed
it, and fed of unhuman sleep.

Snatching the horn of Niam, I blew a long
lingering note.
Came sound from those monstrous sleep-
ers, a sound like the stirring of flies.
He, shaking the fold of his lips, and heav-
ing the pillar of his throat,
Watched me with mournful wonder out of
the wells of his eyes.

I cried, "Come out of the shadow, king of
the nails of gold!
And tell of your goodly household and the
goodly works of your hands,
That we may muse in the starlight and
talk of the battles of old;
Your questioner, Usheen, is worthy, he
comes from the Fenian lands."

Half open his eyes were, and held me,
dull with the smoke of their dreams;
His lips moved slowly in answer, no an-
swer out of them came;
Then he swayed in his fingers the bell-
branch, slow dropping a sound in faint
streams
Softer than snow-flakes in April and pierc-
ing the marrow like flame.

Wrapt in the wave of that music, with
weariness more than of earth,
The moil of my centuries filled me; and
gone like a sea-covered stone
Were the memories of the whole of my

sorrow and the memories of the whole of my mirth,
And a softness came from the starlight and filled me full to the bone.

In the roots of the grasses, the sorrels, I laid my body as low;
And the pearl-pale Niam lay by me, her brow on the midst of my breast;
And the horse was gone in the distance, and years after years 'gan flow;
Square leaves of the ivy moved over us, binding us down to our rest.

And, man of the many white croziers, a century there I forgot;
How the fetlocks drip blood in the battle, when the fallen on fallen lie rolled:
How the falconer follows the falcon in the weed of the heron's plot,
And the names of the demons whose hammers made armor for Conhor of old.

And, man of the many white croziers, a century there I forgot;
That the spear-shaft is made out of ash-wood, the shield out of ozier and hide;
How the hammers spring on the anvil, on the spearhead's burning spot;
How the slow, blue-eyed oxen of Finn low sadly at evening tide.

But in dreams, mild man of the croziers, driving the dust with their throngs,
Moved round me, of seamen or landsmen, all who are winter tales;
Came by me the kings of the Red Branch, with roaring of laughter and songs,
Or moved as they moved once, love-making or piercing the tempest with sails.

Came Blanid, Mac Nessa, tall Fergus who feastward of old time slunk,
Cook Barach, the traitor; and warward, the spittle on his beard never dry,
Dark Balor, as old as a forest, car borne, his mighty head sunk
Helpless, men lifting the lids of his weary and death-making eye.

And by me, in soft red raiment, the Fenians moved in loud streams,
And Grania, walking and smiling, sewed with her needle of bone.
So lived I and lived not, so wrought I and wrought not, with creatures of dreams,
In a long iron sleep, as a fish in the water goes dumb as a stone.

THE STOLEN CHILD[1]

(1889)

Where dips the rocky highland
Of Sleuth Wood in the lake,
There lies a leafy island
Where flapping herons wake
The drowsy water rats;
There we've hid our faery vats,
Full of berries,
And of reddest stolen cherries.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

Where the wave of moonlight glosses
The dim grey sands with light,
Far off by furthest Rosses
We foot it all the night,
Weaving olden dances,
Mingling hands and mingling glances
Till the moon has taken flight;
To and fro we leap
And chase the frothy bubbles,
While the world is full of troubles
And is anxious in its sleep.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

Where the wandering water gushes
From the hills above Glen-Car,
In pools among the rushes
That scarce could bathe a star,
We seek for slumbering trout
And whispering in their ears
Give them unquiet dreams;
Leaning softly out
From ferns that drop their tears
Over the young streams.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

[1] W. B. Yeats, *Early Poems and Stories.* (Copyright, 1925, by the Macmillan Company.) Reprinted by permission.

Away with us he's going,
The solemn-eyed:
He'll hear no more the lowing
Of the calves on the warm hillside
Or the kettle on the hob
Sing peace into his breast,
Or see the brown mice bob
Round and round the oatmeal-chest.
For he comes, the human child,
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
From a world more full of weeping than he can understand.

FERGUS AND THE DRUID[1]

(1893)

FERGUS

The whole day have I followed in the rocks,
And you have changed and flowed from shape to shape.
First as a raven on whose ancient wings
Scarcely a feather lingered, then you seemed
A weasel moving on from stone to stone,
And now at last you wear a human shape,
A thin grey man half lost in gathering night.

DRUID

What would you, king of the proud Red Branch kings?

FERGUS

This would I say, most wise of living souls:
Young subtle Concobar sat close by me
When I gave judgment, and his words were wise,
And what to me was burden without end,
To him seemed easy, so I laid the crown
Upon his head to cast away my sorrow.

DRUID

What would you, king of the proud Red Branch kings?

FERGUS

A king and proud! and that is my despair.
I feast amid my people on the hill,
And pace the woods, and drive my chariot wheels
In the white border of the murmuring sea;
And still I feel the crown upon my head.

DRUID

What would you, Fergus?

FERGUS

Be no more a king
But learn the dreaming wisdom that is yours.

DRUID

Look on my thin grey hair and hollow cheeks
And on these hands that may not lift the sword,
This body trembling like a wind-blown reed.
No woman's loved me, no man sought my help.

FERGUS

A king is but a foolish laborer
Who wastes his blood to be another's dream.

DRUID

Take, if you must, this little bag of dreams;
Unloose the cord, and they will wrap you round.

FERGUS

I see my life go drifting like a river
From change to change; I have been many things,
A green drop in the surge, a gleam of light
Upon a sword, a fir-tree on a hill,
An old slave grinding at a heavy quern,
A king sitting upon a chair of gold,
And all these things were wonderful and great;
But now I have grown nothing, knowing all,
Ah! Druid, Druid, how great webs of sorrow

[1] W. B. Yeats, *Early Poems and Stories.* (Copyright, 1925, by the Macmillan Company.) Reprinted by permission.

Lay hidden in the small slate-colored thing!

THE HOST OF THE AIR[1]

(1899)

O'Driscoll drove with a song
The wild duck and the drake
From the tall and the tufted reeds
Of the drear Hart Lake.

And he saw how the reeds grew dark
At the coming of night tide,
And dreamed of the long dim hair
Of Bridget his bride.

He heard while he sang and dreamed
A piper piping away,
And never was piping so sad,
And never was piping so gay.

And he saw young men and young girls
Who danced on a level place
And Bridget his bride among them,
With a sad and a gay face.

The dancers crowded about him,
And many a sweet thing said,
And a young man brought him red wine
And a young girl white bread.

But Bridget drew him by the sleeve,
Away from the merry bands,
To old men playing at cards
With a twinkling of ancient hands.

The bread and the wine had a doom,
For these were the host of the air;
He sat and played in a dream
Of her long dim hair.

He played with the merry old men
And thought not of evil chance,
Until one bore Bridget his bride
Away from the merry dance.

He bore her away in his arms,
The handsomest young man there,
And his neck and his breast and his arms
Were drowned in her long dim hair.

O'Driscoll scattered the cards
And out of his dream awoke:
Old men and young men and young girls
Were gone like a drifting smoke;

But he heard high up in the air
A piper piping away,
And never was piping so sad,
And never was piping so gay.

HE REMEMBERS FORGOTTEN BEAUTY[2]

(1899)

When my arms wrap you round I press
My heart upon the loveliness
That has long faded from the world;
The jewelled crowns that kings have hurled
In shadowy pools, when armies fled;
The love-tales wrought with silken thread
By dreaming ladies upon cloth
That has made fat the murderous moth;
The roses that of old time were
Woven by ladies in their hair,
The dew-cold lilies ladies bore
Through many a sacred corridor
Where such grey clouds of incense rose
That only the god's eyes did not close:
For that pale breast and lingering hand
Come from a more dream-heavy land,
A more dream-heavy hour than this;
And when you sigh from kiss to kiss
I hear white Beauty sighing, too,
For hours when all must fade like dew,
But flame on flame, deep under deep,
Throne over throne where in half sleep,
Their swords upon their iron knees,
Brood her high lonely mysteries.

1 W. B. Yeats, *Later Poems.* (Copyright, 1924, by the Macmillan Company.) Reprinted by permission.

2 W. B. Yeats, *Later Poems.* (Copyright, 1924, by the Macmillan Company.) Reprinted by permission.

ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN (1859——)

From "A SHROPSHIRE LAD"

(1896)

II

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

IV

REVEILLE

Wake: the silver dusk returning
Up the beach of darkness brims,
And the ship of sunrise burning
Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters
Trampled to the floor it spanned
And the tent of night in tatters
Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying:
Hear the drums of morning play;
Hark, the empty highways crying
"Who'll beyond the hills away?"

Towns and countries woo together,
Forelands beacon, belfries call;
Never lad that trod on leather
Lived to feast his heart with all.

Up, lad: thews that lie and cumber
Sunlit pallets never thrive;
Morns abed and daylight slumber
Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;
Breath's a ware that will not keep.
Up, lad: when the journey's over
There'll be time enough to sleep.

V

Oh see how thick the goldcup flowers
Are lying in field and lane,
With dandelions to tell the hours
That never are told again.
Oh may I squire you round the meads
And pick you posies gay?
—'Twill do no harm to take my arm.
"You may, young man, you may."

Ah, spring was sent for lass and lad,
'Tis now the blood runs gold,
And man and maid had best be glad
Before the world is old.
What flowers to-day may flower to-morrow,
But never as good as new.
—Suppose I wound my arm right round—
"'Tis true, young man, 'tis true."

Some lads there are, 'tis shame to say,
That only court to thieve,
And once they bear the bloom away
'Tis little enough they leave.
Then keep your heart for men like me
And safe from trustless chaps.
My love is true and all for you.
"Perhaps, young man, perhaps."

Oh, look in my eyes then, can you doubt?
—Why, 'tis a mile from town.
How green the grass is all about!
We might as well sit down.
—Ah, life, what is it but a flower?
Why must true lovers sigh?
Be kind, have pity, my own, my pretty,—
"Good-bye, young man, good-bye."

VII

When smoke stood up from Ludlow,
And mist blew off from Teme,

And blithe afield to ploughing
Against the morning beam
I strode beside my team,

The blackbird in the coppice
Looked out to see me stride,
And hearkened as I whistled
The trampling team beside,
And fluted and replied:

"Lie down, lie down, young yeoman;
What use to rise and rise?
Rise man a thousand mornings
Yet down at last he lies,
And then the man is wise."

I heard the tune he sang me,
And spied his yellow bill;
I picked a stone and aimed it
And threw it with a will:
Then the bird was still.

Then my soul within me
Took up the blackbird's strain,
And still beside the horses
Along the dewy lane
It sang the song again:

"Lie down, lie down, young yeoman;
The sun moves always west;
The road one treads to labor
Will lead one home to rest,
And that will be the best."

IX

On moonlit heath and lonesome bank
The sheep beside me graze;
And yon the gallows used to clank
Fast by the four cross ways.

A careless shepherd once would keep
The flocks by moonlight there,[1]
And high amongst the glimmering sheep
The dead man stood on air.

They hang us now in Shrewsbury jail:
The whistles blow forlorn,
And trains all night groan on the rail
To men that die at morn.

There sleeps in Shrewsbury jail to-night,
Or wakes, as may betide,
A better lad, if things went right,
Than most that sleep outside.

And naked to the hangman's noose
The morning clocks will ring
A neck God made for other use
Than strangling in a string.

And sharp the link of life will snap,
And dead on air will stand
Heels that held up as straight a chap
As treads upon the land.

So here I'll watch the night and wait
To see the morning shine,
When he will hear the stroke of eight
And not the stroke of nine;

And wish my friend as sound a sleep
As lads' I did not know,
That shepherded the moonlit sheep
A hundred years ago.

XI

On your midnight pallet lying,
Listen, and undo the door:
Lads that waste the light in sighing
In the dark should sigh no more;
Night should ease a lover's sorrow;
Therefore, since I go to-morrow,
Pity me before.

In the land to which I travel,
The far dwelling, let me say—
Once, if here the couch is gravel,
In a kinder bed I lay,
And the breast the darnel smothers
Rested once upon another's
When it was not clay.

XII

When I watch the living meet,
And the moving pageant file
Warm and breathing through the street
Where I lodge a little while,

If the heats of hate and lust
In the house of flesh are strong,
Let me mind the house of dust
Where my sojourn shall be long.

In the nation that is not
Nothing stands that stood before;
There revenges are forgot,
And the hater hates no more;

Lovers lying two and two
Ask not whom they sleep beside,
And the bridegroom all night through
Never turns him to the bride.

[1] Hanging in chains was called keeping sheep by moonlight.

XIII

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free."
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
"The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue."
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

XIX

TO AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

To-day, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsman of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut,
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honors out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

XXI

BREDON [1] HILL

In summertime on Bredon
The bells they sound so clear;
Round both the shires they ring them
In steeples far and near,
A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning
My love and I would lie,
And see the colored counties,
And hear the larks so high
About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her
In valleys miles away:
"Come all to church, good people;
Good people, come and pray."
But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer
Among the springing thyme,
"Oh, peal upon our wedding,
And we will hear the chime,
And come to church in time."

But when the snows at Christmas
On Bredon top were strown,
My love rose up so early
And stole out unbeknown
And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,
Groom there was none to see,
The mourners followed after,
And so to church went she,
And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,
And still the steeples hum.
"Come all to church, good people,"—
Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;
I hear you, I will come.

XXVI

Along the field as we came by
A year ago, my love and I,
The aspen over stile and stone
Was talking to itself alone.
"Oh who are these that kiss and pass?
A country lover and his lass;
Two lovers looking to be wed;
And time shall put them both to bed,

1 Pronounced Breedon.

But she shall lie with earth above,
And he beside another love."

And sure enough beneath the tree
There walks another love with me,
And overhead the aspen heaves
Its rainy-sounding silver leaves;
And I spell nothing in their stir,
But now perhaps they speak to her,
And plain for her to understand
They talk about a time at hand
When I shall sleep with clover clad,
And she beside another lad.

XXVII

"Is my team ploughing,
That I was used to drive
And hear the harness jingle
When I was man alive?"

Ay, the horses trample,
The harness jingles now;
No change though you lie under
The land you used to plough.

"Is football playing
Along the river shore,
With lads to chase the leather,
Now I stand up no more?"

Ay, the ball is flying,
The lads play heart and soul;
The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal.

"Is my girl happy,
That I thought hard to leave,
And has she tired of weeping
As she lies down at eve?"

Ay, she lies down lightly,
She lies not down to weep:
Your girl is well contented.
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

"Is my friend hearty,
Now I am thin and pine,
And has he found to sleep in
A better bed than mine?"

Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
Never ask me whose.

XXVIII

THE WELSH MARCHES

High the vanes of Shrewsbury gleam
Islanded in Severn stream;
The bridges from the steepled crest
Cross the water east and west.

The flag of morn in conqueror's state
Enters at the English gate:
The vanquished eve, as night prevails
Bleeds upon the road to Wales.

Ages since the vanquished bled
Round my mother's marriage-bed;
There the ravens feasted far
About the open house of war:

When Severn down to Buildwas ran
Colored with the death of man,
Couched upon her brother's grave
The Saxon got me on the slave.

The sound of fight is silent long
That began the ancient wrong;
Long the voice of tears is still
That wept of old the endless ill.

In my heart it has not died,
The war that sleeps on Severn side;
They cease not fighting, east and west,
On the marches of my breast.

Here the truceless armies yet
Trample, rolled in blood and sweat;
They kill and kill and never die;
And I think that each is I.

None will part us, none undo
The knot that makes one flesh of two,
Sick with hatred, sick with pain,
Strangling—When shall we be slain?

When shall I be dead and rid
Of the wrong my father did?
How long, how long, till spade and hearse
Put to sleep my mother's curse?

XLIII

THE IMMORTAL PART

When I meet the morning beam,
Or lay me down at night to dream,
I hear my bones within me say,
"Another night, another day.

"When shall this slough of sense be cast,
This dust of thoughts be laid at last,
The man of flesh and soul be slain
And the man of bone remain?

"This tongue that talks, these lungs that shout,
These thews that hustle us about,
This brain that fills the skull with schemes,
And its humming hive of dreams,—

"These to-day are proud in power
And lord it in their little hour:
The immortal bones obey control
Of dying flesh and dying soul.

" 'Tis long till eve and morn are gone:
Slow the endless night comes on,
And late to fulness grows the birth
That shall last as long as earth.

"Wanderers eastward, wanderers west,
Know you why you cannot rest?
'Tis that every mother's son
Travails with a skeleton.

"Lie down in the bed of dust;
Bear the fruit that bear you must;
Bring the eternal seed to light,
And morn is all the same as night.

"Rest you so from trouble sore,
Fear the heat o' the sun no more,
Nor the snowing winter wild,
Now you labor not with child.

"Empty vessel, garment cast,
We that wore you long shall last.
—Another night, another day."
So my bones within me say.

Therefore they shall do my will
Today while I am master still,
And flesh and soul, now both are strong,
Shall hale the sullen slaves along,

Before this fire of sense decay,
This smoke of thought blow clean away,
And leave with ancient night alone
The stedfast and enduring bone.

XLV

If it chance your eye offend you,
Pluck it out, lad, and be sound:
'Twill hurt, but here are salves to friend you,
And many a balsam grows on ground.

And if your hand or foot offend you,
Cut it off, lad, and be whole;
But play the man, stand up and end you,
When your sickness is your soul.

LI

Loitering with a vacant eye
Along the Grecian gallery,
And brooding on my heavy ill,
I met a statue standing still.
Still in marble stone stood he,
And stedfastly he looked at me.
"Well met," I thought the look would say,
"We both were fashioned far away;
We neither knew, when we were young,
These Londoners we live among."

Still he stood and eyed me hard,
An earnest and a grave regard:
"What, lad, drooping with your lot?
I too would be where I am not.
I too survey that endless line
Of men whose thoughts are not as mine.
Years, ere you stood up from rest,
On my neck the collar prest;
Years, when you lay down your ill,
I shall stand and bear it still.
Courage, lad, 'tis not for long:
Stand, quit you like stone, be strong."
So I thought his look would say;
And light on me my trouble lay,
And I slept out in flesh and bone
Manful like the man of stone.

LIV

With rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

LV

Westward on the high-hilled plains
Where for me the world began,

Still, I think, in newer veins
Frets the changeless blood of man.

Now that other lads than I
Strip to bathe on Severn shore,
They, no help, for all they try,
Tread the mill I trod before.

There, when hueless is the west
And the darkness hushes wide,
Where the lad lies down to rest
Stands the troubled dream beside.

There, on thoughts that once were mine,
Day looks down the eastern steep,
And the youth at morning shine
Makes the vow he will not keep.

LXII

"Terence, this is stupid stuff:
You eat your victuals fast enough;
There can't be much amiss, 'tis clear,
To see the rate you drink your beer.
But oh, good Lord, the verse you make,
It gives a chap the belly-ache.
The cow, the old cow, she is dead;
It sleeps well, the hornèd head:
We poor lads, 'tis our turn now
To hear such tunes as killed the cow.
Pretty friendship 'tis to rhyme
Your friends to death before their time
Moping melancholy mad:
Come, pipe a tune to dance to, lad."

Why, if 'tis dancing you would be,
There's brisker pipes than poetry.
Say, for what were hop-yards meant,
Or why was Burton built on Trent?
Oh many a peer of England brews
Livelier liquor than the Muse,
And malt does more than Milton can
To justify God's ways to man.
Ale, man, ale's the stuff to drink
For fellows whom it hurts to think:
Look into the pewter pot
To see the world as the world's not.
And faith, 'tis pleasant till 'tis past:
The mischief is that 'twill not last.
Oh I have been to Ludlow fair
And left my necktie God knows where,
And carried half-way home, or near,
Pints and quarts of Ludlow beer:
Then the world seemed none so bad
And I myself a sterling lad;
And down in lovely muck I've lain,
Happy till I woke again.
Then I saw the morning sky:
Heigho, the tale was all a lie;
The world, it was the old world yet,
I was I, my things were wet,
And nothing now remained to do
But begin the game anew.

Therefore, since the world has still
Much good, but much less good than ill,
And while the sun and moon endure
Luck's a chance, but trouble's sure,
I'd face it as a wise man would,
And train for ill and not for good.
'Tis true, the stuff I bring for sale
Is not so brisk a brew as ale:
Out of a stem that scored the hand
I wrung it in a weary land.
But take it: if the smack is sour,
The better for the embittered hour;
It should do good to heart and head
When your soul is in my soul's stead;
And I will friend you, if I may,
In the dark and cloudy day.

There was a king reigned in the East:
There, when kings will sit to feast,
They get their fill before they think
With poisoned meat and poisoned drink.
He gathered all that springs to birth
From the many-venomed earth;
First a little, thence to more,
He sampled all her killing store;
And easy, smiling, seasoned sound,
Sate the king when healths went round.
They put arsenic in his meat
And stared aghast to watch him eat;
They poured strychnine in his cup
And shook to see him drink it up:
They shook, they stared as white's their shirt:
Them it was their poison hurt.
—I tell the tale that I heard told.
Mithridates, he died old.

RUDYARD KIPLING (1865——)

THE KING

(1894) [1]

"Farewell, Romance!" the Cave-men said;
"With bone well carved he went away,
Flint arms the ignoble arrowhead.
And jasper tips the spear to-day.
Changed are the Gods of Hunt and Dance,
And he with these. Farewell, Romance!"

"Farewell, Romance!" the Lake-folk sighed:
"We lift the weight of flatling years;
The caverns of the mountain-side
Hold him who scorns our hutted piers.
Lost hills whereby we dare not dwell,
Guard ye his rest. Romance, Farewell!"

"Farewell, Romance!" the Soldier spoke;
"By sleight of sword we may not win.
But scuttle 'mid unclean'y smoke
Of arquebus and culverin.
Honor is lost, and none may tell
Who paid good blows. Romance, farewell!"

"Farewell, Romance!" the Traders cried;
"Our keels have lain with every sea;
The dull-returning wind and tide
Heave up the wharf where we would be;
The known and noted breezes swell
Our trudging sail. Romance, farewell!"

"Good-bye, Romance!" the Skipper said:
"He vanished with the coal we burn;
Our dial marks full steam ahead.
Our speed is timed to half a turn.
Sure as the ferried barge we ply
'Twixt port and port, Romance, good-bye!"

"Romance!" the season-tickets mourn,
"*He* never ran to catch his train,
But passed with coach and guard and horn—
And left the local—late again!"
Confound Romance! . . . And all unseen
Romance brought up the nine-fifteen.

His hand was on the lever laid,
His oil-can soothed the worrying cranks,
His whistle waked the snowbound grade,
His fog-horn cut the reeking Banks;
By dock and deep and mine and mill
The Boy-god reckless labored still!

Robed, crowned and throned, he wove his spell,
Where heart-blood beat or hearth-smoke curled,
With unconsidered miracle,
Hedged in a backward-gazing world:
Then taught his chosen bard to say:
"Our King was with us—yesterday!"

[1] From *The Seven Seas*. (Copyright 1896 by Rudyard Kipling.)

THE BALLAD OF EAST AND WEST

(1889) [1]

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!

Kamal is out with twenty men to raise the Borderside.
And he has lifted the Colonel's mare that is the Colonel's pride:
He has lifted her out of the stable-door between the dawn and the day,
And turned the calkins upon her feet, and ridden her far away.

[1] From *Barrack-Room Ballads*. (Copyright 1892 and 1893 by Macmillan Co. Copyright 1899 by Rudyard Kipling.)

Then up and spoke the Colonel's son that led a troop of the Guides:
"Is there never a man of all my men can say where Kamal hides?"
Then up and spoke Mohammed Khan, the son of the Ressaldar:
"If ye know the track of the morning-mist, ye know where his pickets are.
At dusk he harries the Abazai—at dawn he is into Bonair,
But he must go by Fort Bukloh to his own place to fare,
So if ye gallop to Fort Bukloh as fast as a bird can fly,
By the favor of God ye may cut him off ere he win to the Tongue of Jagai.
But if he be past the Tongue of Jagai, right swiftly turn ye then,
For the length and the breadth of that grisly plain is sown with Kamal's men.
There is rock to the left, and rock to the right, and low lean thorn between,
And ye may hear a breech-bolt snick where never a man is seen."
The Colonel's son has taken a horse, and a raw rough dun was he,
With the mouth of a bell and the heart of Hell and the head of a gallows-tree.
The Colonel's son to the Fort has won, they bid him stay to eat—
Who rides at the tail of a Border thief, he sits not long at his meat.
He's up and away from Fort Bukloh as fast as he can fly,
Till he was aware of his father's mare in the gut of the Tongue of Jagai,
Till he was aware of his father's mare with Kamal upon her back,
And when he could spy the white of her eye, he made the pistol crack.
He has fired once, he has fired twice, but the whistling ball went wide.
"Ye shoot like a soldier," Kamal said. "Show now if ye can ride."
It's up and over the Tongue of Jagai, as blown dust-devils go,
The dun he fled like a stag of ten, but the mare like a barren doe.
The dun he leaned against the bit and slugged his head above,
But the red mare played with the snaffle-bars, as a maiden plays with a glove.
There was rock to the left and rock to the right, and low lean thorn between,
And thrice he heard a breech-bolt snick tho' never a man was seen.
They have ridden the low moon out of the sky, their hoofs drum up the dawn,
The dun he went like a wounded bull, but the mare like a new-roused fawn.
The dun he fell at a water-course—in a woeful heap fell he,
And Kamal has turned the red mare back, and pulled the rider free.
He has knocked the pistol out of his hand —small room was there to strive,
"'Twas only by favor of mine," quoth he, "ye rode so long alive:
There was not a rock for twenty mile, there was not a clump of tree,
But covered a man of my own men with his rifle cocked on his knee.
If I had raised my bridle-hand, as I have held it low,
The little jackals that flee so fast were feasting all in a row:
If I had bowed my head on my breast, as I have held it high,
The kite that whistles above us now were gorged till she could not fly."
Lightly answered the Colonel's son: "Do good to bird and beast,
But count who come for the broken meats before thou makest a feast.
If there should follow a thousand swords to carry my bones away,
Belike the price of a jackal's meal were more than a thief could pay.
They will feed their horse on the standing crop, their men on the garnered grain,
The thatch of the byres will serve their fires when all the cattle are slain.
But if thou thinkest the price be fair,— thy brethren wait to sup,
The hound is kin to the jackal-spawn,— howl, dog, and call them up!
And if thou thinkest the price be high, in steer and gear and stack,
Give me my father's mare again, and I'll fight my own way back!"
Kamal has gripped him by the hand and set him upon his feet.
"No talk shall be of dogs," said he, "when wolf and grey wolf meet.
May I eat dirt if thou hast hurt of me in deed or breath;
What dam of lances brought thee forth to jest at the dawn with Death?"
Lightly answered the Colonel's son: "I hold by the blood of my clan:
Take up the mare for my father's gift—by God, she has carried a man!"
The red mare ran to the Colonel's son, and nuzzled against his breast;
"We be two strong men," said Kamal then, "but she loveth the younger best.

So she shall go with a lifter's dower, my turquoise-studded rein,
My broidered saddle and saddle-cloth, and silver stirrups twain."
The Colonel's son a pistol drew, and held it muzzle-end,
"Ye have taken the one from a foe," said he; "will ye take the mate from a friend?"
"A gift for a gift," said Kamal straight; "a limb for the risk of a limb.
Thy father has sent his son to me, I'll send my son to him!"
With that he whistled his only son, that dropped from a mountain-crest—
He trod the ling like a buck in spring, and he looked like a lance in rest.
"Now here is thy master," Kamal said, "who leads a troop of the Guides,
And thou must ride at his left side as shield on shoulder rides.
Till Death or I cut loose the tie, at camp and board and bed,
Thy life is his—thy fate it is to guard him with thy head.
So, thou must eat the White Queen's meat, and all her foes are thine,
And thou must harry thy father's hold for the peace of the Border-line,
And thou must make a trooper tough and hack thy way to power—
Belike they will raise thee to Ressaldar when I am hanged in Peshawur."

They have looked each other between the eyes, and there they found no fault,
They have taken the Oath of the Brother-in-Blood on leavened bread and salt:
They have taken the Oath of the Brother-in-Blood on fire and fresh-cut sod,
On the hilt and the haft of the Khyber knife, and the Wondrous Names of God.
The Colonel's son he rides the mare and Kamal's boy the dun,
And two have come back to Fort Bukloh where there went forth but one.
And when they drew to the Quarter-Guard, full twenty swords flew clear—
There was not a man but carried his feud with the blood of the mountaineer.
"Ha' done! ha' done!" said the Colonel's son. "Put up the steel at your sides!
Last night ye had struck at a Border thief—to-night 't is a man of the Guides!"

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!

RECESSIONAL

(1897) [1]

God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word—
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!

1 From *The Five Nations.* (Copyright 1903 by Rudyard Kipling.)

SONG OF THE WISE CHILDREN

(1902) [1]

When the darkened Fifties dip to the North,
And frost and the fog divide the air,
And the day is dead at his breaking-forth,
Sirs, it is bitter beneath the Bear!

Far to Southward they wheel and glance,
The million molten spears of morn—
The spears of our deliverance
That shine on the house where we were born.

Flying-fish about our bows,
Flying sea-fires in our wake:
This is the road to our Father's House,
Whither we go for our souls' sake!

We have forfeited our birthright,
We have forsaken all things meet;
We have forgotten the look of light,
We have forgotten the scent of heat.

They that walk with shaded brows,
Year by year in a shining land,
They be men of our Father's House,
They shall receive us and understand.

We shall go back by boltless doors,
To the life unaltered our childhood knew—
To the naked feet on the cool, dark floors,
And the high-ceiled rooms that the Trade blows through:

To the trumpet flowers and the moon beyond,
And the tree-toad's chorus drowning all—
And the lisp of the split banana-frond
That talked us to sleep when we were small.

The wayside magic, the threshold spells,
Shall soon undo what the North has done—
Because of the sights and the sounds and the smells
That ran with our youth in the eye of the sun.

And Earth accepting shall ask no vows,
Nor the Sea our love, nor our lover the Sky.
When we return to our Father's House
Only the English shall wonder why!

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